

孩子，你在中国有个家

作者：胡明

2025 年 7 月 22 日

本文为作者基于亲身经历的真实记录，内容旨在回忆个人家庭生活与灵性成长，与任何政治立场或组织无关。文中涉及制度描述，仅为所处环境下的客观体验，敬请理性阅读。

感谢胡博、胡忠山等家人及好友的帮助

《孩子，你在中国有个家》（实名版）

作者：胡明（Ming Hu）

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东平的祝愿：

让丈夫成为爱主的男人、家庭中属灵的带领者；

让妻子成为 神所爱蒙大爱的女子、成为丈夫的顺服者、帮助者、成为孩子属灵好的影响者；学习主的品格和属性，成为箴言 31 章中智慧女人；

让儿女成为爱主的孩子，在专业领域成为有影响力的专家，彰显 神的荣耀。

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前言

今天是 2025 年 7 月 20 日，这一段时间以来，我一直想写一篇文章，或者说是一篇长篇的文章，或者称之为书的东西。原因是这样的，我的女儿从 16 岁的时候就转到美国去读高中，一直到大学毕业，毕业之后又找到了工作，我想大概率她今后会在那里结婚，然后有自己的孩子，有自己的生活。而我呢，作为她的父亲，很有可能去不了美国生活，那这一家人就会一直处于一种两地分居的状态。说是分居，是因为胡爽也就是我的女儿，还没有结婚，也没有她自己的孩子，我们仍然是一家人，但我想如果有一天她有了自己的孩子，那她就会有自己的新家庭，这样就是两个家，我在想，她的家和她的孩子会不会把在中国的这个家忘记了，也或许有一天胡爽，可以和她的家人一起来中国生活、居住，这也都是未知。但我想对她的孩子来讲，肯定是需要一个对她母亲以及她母亲以前所在的国度有一个了解的过程。我想这个过程除了胡爽自己给她的孩子们讲述之外，更多的可能是需要她这个姥爷为她们讲。因此我就萌生了一种想法，就是把 we 这一家人的生活和所在的这个国家的背景，以及方方面面的情况都做一个详细的介绍。这样即便有一天胡爽和她的孩子们没有机会来到中国生活，她也可以从这篇文章，从我这本书里了解到她妈妈的父母以及所在的家族究竟是什么样，就会有一个比较具体的认识，这就是写这本书的初衷。

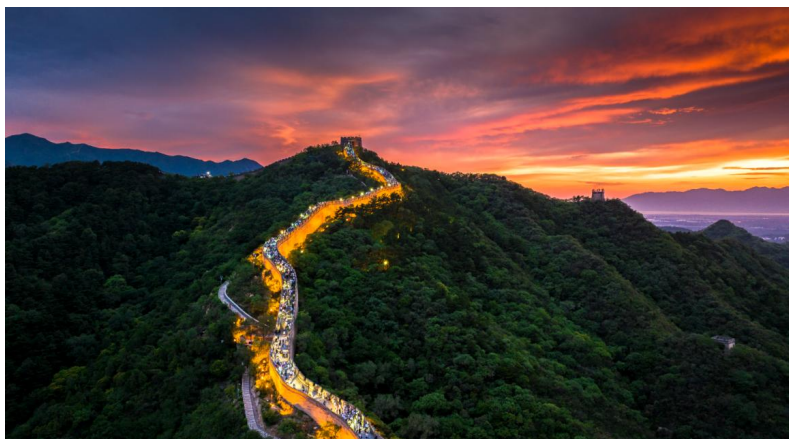
胡爽青少年时所在的国度

第一部分：中国 - 正在快速发展的国家

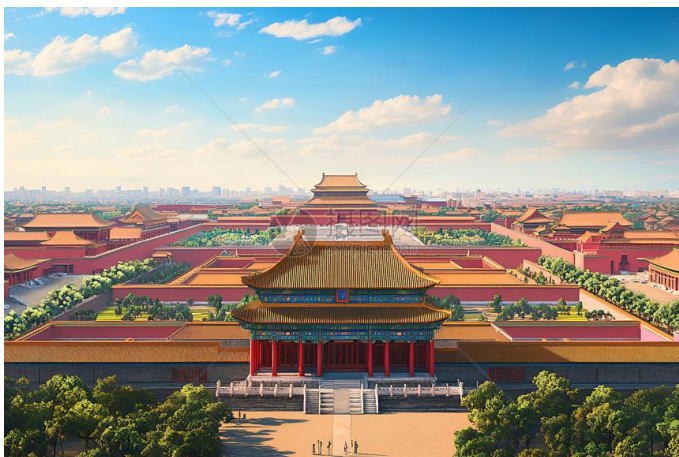
你站在世界屋脊青藏高原，雪山环绕，空气稀薄得像在月球上。一路向东跨越三千多公里，便来到山东省的海岸，比邻东海——这便是中国。它的国土面积九百六十万平方公里，与美国本土加阿拉斯加相当，而人口超过十四亿，是美国的四倍。

两条母亲河从西向东奔流。长江比密西西比河还长，黄河则是中华文明的摇篮，千万年间浇灌出无数农田，养活了这个庞大的国度。气候从北至南变化万千：哈尔滨的冬天冷过明尼苏达，海南的热带风情却让人想起夏威夷。西北有漫漫戈壁，西南有郁郁雨林。熊猫在竹林里打滚，骆驼在戈壁滩上缓行，猴子在南方的丛林间荡来荡去。

五千年文明，四大古国之一。长城全长两万一千公里，从纽约到洛杉矶往返数趟尚有余。登上八达岭或慕田峪，仿佛走进了一部古代传奇。



北京故宫占地七十二万平方米，有房屋九千九百九十九间——皇帝不敢盖满一万间，唯恐抢了老天爷的风头。红墙黄瓦之下，龙飞凤舞，宫斗剧的实景就在眼前。



西安兵马俑更是惊人。一九七四年，几个农民打井时无意间发现了八千多个真人般大小的陶俑、陶马和战车，它们排成整肃的军阵，守护秦始皇地下两千年。每一张脸都各不相同，像是古代工匠留下的 3D 打印大军。人们称它为“世界第八大奇迹”。



此外，颐和园的昆明湖上可以划船，悬空寺像印第安纳·琼斯冒险片中的场景，张家界的浮空山则直接启发了《阿凡达》里的潘多拉星球。

今日的中国充满未来感。世界第二大经济体，从“世界工厂”一路升级到高科技前沿。高铁里程四万五千公里，全球第一，从北京到上海一千三百公里只需四小时。5G 网络覆盖广泛，比亚迪电动车行销全球，支付宝和微信支付几乎覆盖所有日常场景。TikTok 的前身便是中国的抖音，《原神》《王者荣耀》成为全球爆款游戏。中国自己建成了“天宫”空间站，还成功登陆月球背面，向火星送去了探测车。

饮食远不止美式中餐。八大菜系各具风韵：四川麻辣火锅烫得人舌尖发麻，广东早茶里小笼包一口爆汁，新疆的孜然羊肉串香飘四溢，北京烤鸭皮脆肉嫩。夜市上，臭豆腐闻着臭吃着香，烤鱿鱼滋滋作响，珍珠奶茶人手一杯。春节烟花炸响夜空，端午赛龙舟吃粽子，中秋赏月品月饼。红包、灯会、舞龙，热闹非凡。

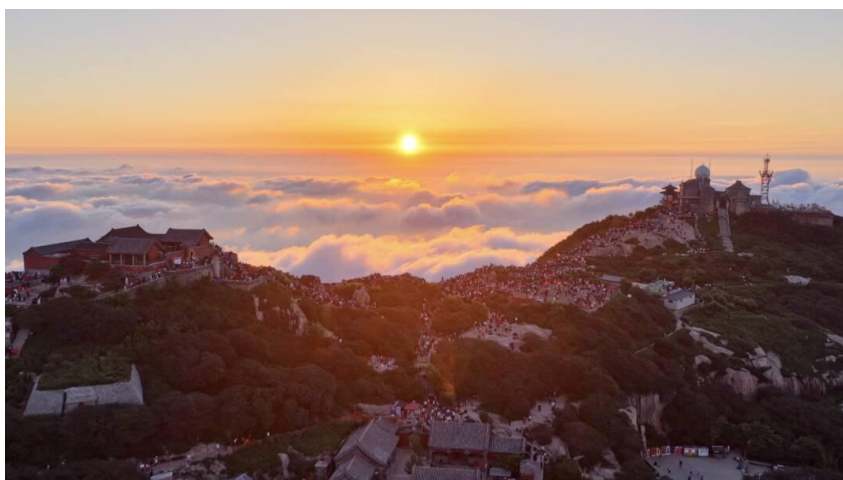
文化上也是新旧交融。孔子教人仁义与中庸之道，影响东亚数千年。道教崇尚自然，佛教从印度传入。如今古寺旁矗立着摩天大楼，C-pop 偶像与电竞战队一起拿下世界冠军。年轻人生活在上海、深圳，奶茶外卖、共享单车、无人机送货构成日常，他们在学业上竞争激烈，也懂得享受生活。五十六个民族中汉族最多，藏族寺庙庄严，蒙古草原上马蹄声碎，维吾尔族舞蹈热烈，壮族泼水节欢腾——像美国那样多元，却根脉更深。

中国走的是中国特色社会主义道路。从贫弱到富强，八亿人摆脱贫困，在人工智能、绿色能源、量子计算等领域奋力冲刺。挑战固然存在，但能量充沛。想要理解二十一世纪，就必须理解中国。

第二部分：山东省 - 中国缩小版，孔子故乡

将地图缩小，目光投向山东。它位于东部沿海，黄河从这里入海，整个半岛像一只大鹰伸出翅膀探入黄海和渤海。人口过亿，比许多国家都多。为什么说它是“中国缩影”？因为地势西高东低，中部以泰山为脊梁，与全国的三级阶梯地形颇为相似，内陆文明与海洋开放两种气质并存。“一山一水一圣人”恰如其分地概括了山东。

一山，泰山。五岳之尊，世界自然与文化双遗产。古代帝王登山封禅，祈祷国泰民安。如今攀上七千多级台阶等待日出，云海翻涌，金光万丈，一路攀登竟也有几分治愈。



一水，黄河入海处湿地广袤，红冠鹤与天鹅翩跹其间。京杭大运河穿省而过，曾是古代物流大动脉，济宁、临清因运河而繁华。《水浒传》里一百单八将聚义梁山，替天行道，恍若古代的复仇者联盟。

经济上，山东人称“鲁大壮”。四十一个工业大类齐全，GDP 常年位居全国前三。农业同样称王：寿光的蔬菜、烟台的苹果、金乡的大蒜都是全国第一，海鲜更是新鲜。

一圣人，孔子。曲阜“三孔”是儒家圣地。孔庙祭祀孔子，建筑宏大，对称完美；孔府是孔子后人延续了两千多年的大宅；孔林则是全球最大、最古老的家族墓地，十万多座坟冢错落，古木参天。走在其中，仿佛一步踏入了儒家的精神故乡。



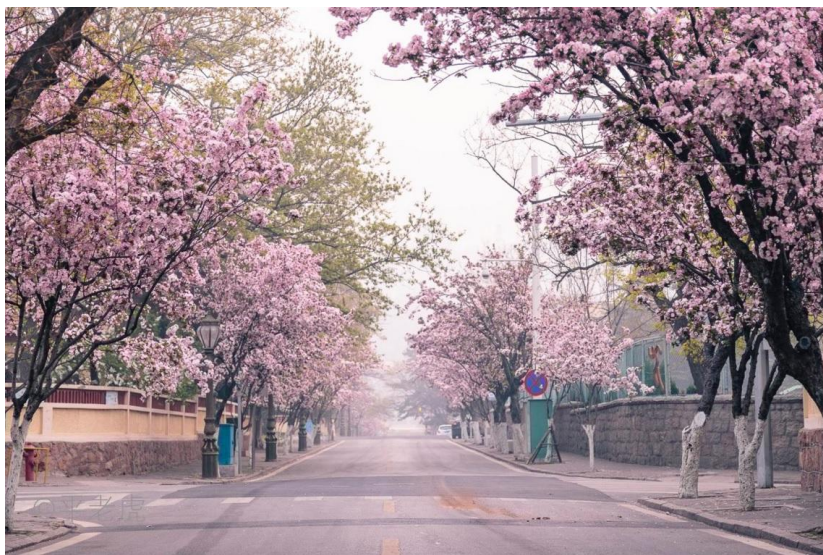
文化上有两颗明珠：齐文化开放务实，出了管仲、孙子兵法、田忌赛马这些聪明故事；鲁文化则敦厚稳重，以孔子为代表。山东人因而既好客又接地气，能文能武。济南号称“泉城”，家家泉水，户户垂杨，趵突泉、大明湖美不胜收。山东菜煎饼卷大葱、糖醋黄河鲤鱼、卤肉，朴实而香浓。

山东就是中国的精华浓缩包：神山、圣人、英雄、水道、工业、农业，样样不缺。来一趟山东，便等于懂得了大半个中国。

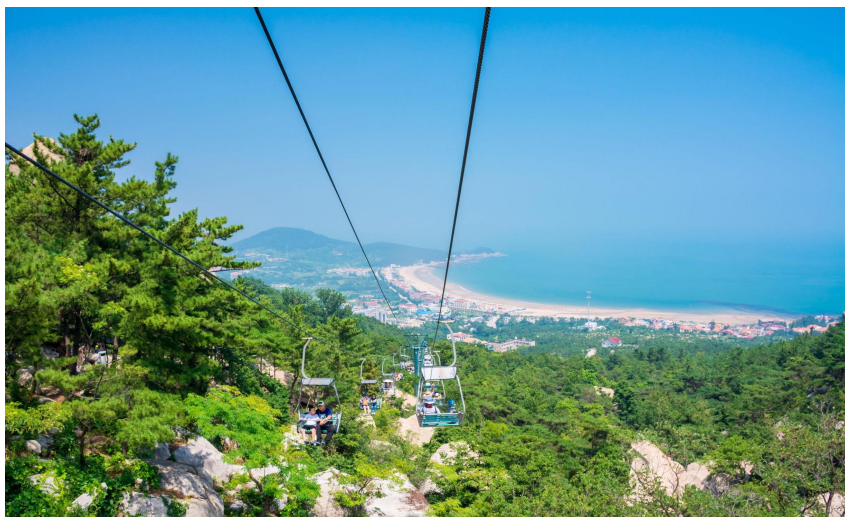
第三部分：青岛市－海滨+红瓦绿树

终于到了青岛（读“Ching-dow”）。它位于山东半岛南端，被黄海紧紧环抱，面积一万一千平方公里，海岸线八百八十二公里，外加一百二十个小岛。气候宜人，夏不酷热，冬不严寒。康有为曾夸赞：“青山绿树，不寒不暑，碧海蓝天，中国第一。”

历史颇有意思。一八九八年德国租借此地，兴建了大批欧式建筑和青岛啤酒厂（Tsingtao Beer）。如今老城区满布德国风情，恍惚间像到了欧洲。八大关堪称万国建筑博览，俄罗斯、法国、德国、丹麦风格的别墅错落其间，春天樱花粉，秋天银杏金，被誉为中国最美街区之一。



经典地标中，栈桥伸入大海，海鸥翔集，涛声阵阵；五四广场上那座“五月的风”红色雕塑动感十足，纪念五四运动的起点；奥帆中心是二〇〇八年奥运会的帆船赛场，如今白帆点点，海风拂面。崂山是“海上第一名山”，道教圣地，传说秦始皇曾来此寻找仙丹。太清宫千年古刹，《聊斋志异》里的狐仙故事便取材于此。登山望海，雾气缭绕，宛若仙境。海滩有第一海水浴场、黄金沙滩，夏日里游泳、沙滩排球、烤鱿鱼，好不快活。



青岛是美食天堂。靠海吃海，辣炒蛤蜊、原壳鲍鱼、葱烧海参、鲅鱼水饺，样样鲜美。街头常见塑料袋装散啤配海鲜，青岛人最爱“哈啤酒，吃蛤蜊”。青岛国际啤酒节是亚洲最大的啤酒盛会，每年夏天持续一个月，灯光、音乐、美食摊位汇聚成巨型夏日派对——未成年的游客也有无酒精区，灯光美食同样尽兴。



经济实力强劲。二〇二五年，青岛 GDP 超过一万七千亿元。“五朵金花”海尔（智能家电全球第一）、海信（大屏电视）、青岛啤酒、双星、

澳柯玛在此绽放；新兴产业如人工智能、生物医药也在加速。青岛港是世界级大港，二〇二四年集装箱吞吐量突破三千万标箱，连接一百八十多个国家，是中日韩贸易的枢纽。

城市氛围对青少年十分友好。地铁与共享单车便捷，商场里有电玩城、KTV 包厢和电影院。夜市撸串，大学城充满年轻活力。空气干净，绿地众多。可以冲浪、帆船、爬崂山、逛老建筑、看科技展——像旧金山的山海风光，叠加欧洲老街的风情，又带着中国式的未来感。理想的一天大概是这样：清晨爬崂山，中午吃海鲜大餐，下午到沙滩玩水，傍晚去八大关看日落，接着夜市撸串。周末去啤酒节，或者乘高铁到周边转转。城市安全，人们热情，英文也常见。

青岛，正是现代中国最宜居的模样：历史不老，海洋辽阔，科技向上，啤酒文化又格外接地气。

福利：中美纬度对照 – 同纬度小伙伴！

中国与美国本土加阿拉斯加的纬度跨度相近，但中国背靠大陆、面向太平洋，美国则两洋夹击，因而气候差异不小。

北京（北纬 39.9 度）大约与华盛顿特区、费城同纬度——都是政治文化中心。

上海（北纬 31.2 度）接近休斯顿、新奥尔良。

广州（北纬 23.1 度）接近檀香山。

哈尔滨（北纬 45.8 度）接近明尼阿波利斯。

山东尤其是青岛（北纬 36.1 度）的纬度与旧金山、萨克拉门托、拉斯维加斯十分接近。但青岛夏季多雨，冬天更冷一些，像东海岸那样四季分明，同时又有海洋调节。若论角色，山东好比宾夕法尼亚州——文化的发源地（孔子 vs 独立宣言），德国影响深远（青岛建筑 vs 宾州的德裔背景），又有港口历史。青岛则混合了费城的港口气质、旧金山的悠闲风韵，以及像密尔沃基那样傍海的啤酒文化。

距离上，青岛到休斯顿约一万一千七百六十二公里，时差十三到十四个小时；到拉斯维加斯稍近，约一万零一百五十一公里，时差更大。同纬度而风情迥异，正是有趣之处。

从长城日出到泰山云海，从孔子的智慧到海尔的智能，从崂山的仙气到青岛啤酒的狂欢——这片土地古老又年轻，传统又潮流。来中国，尤其是来青岛，你会在“红瓦绿树、碧海蓝天”中遇见一种诗意的日常生活。不妨学几句中文：你好，谢谢，青岛啤酒。

想来一场这样的冒险吗？不妨请家人安排一次行程，或者先在 Google Earth 上慢慢逛逛。

胡爽的家

下面我就开始写这本书的第一部分，关于胡爽的家。胡爽家里一共有三个人，当然是她的爸爸和妈妈。我叫胡明，她的妈妈叫张东平，都是土生土长的青岛人。

青岛市在哪里呢？青岛属于中国的山东省，位于山东省的东南，是一个沿海城市，地理位置相当于美国弗吉尼亚州东海岸的诺福克（或弗吉尼亚比奇），纬度基本相同，但青岛的人口一千万左右，远比诺福克多。青岛市是山东省第二大经济文化中心，是中国沿海重要中心城市，也是山东半岛蓝色经济区核心区龙头城市。

胡爽的爸爸、妈妈分别是胡明和张东平，于 1995 年 10 月 1 日结婚，结婚时分别是 27 岁、26 岁。婚房位于伊春路 85 号的 5 楼，是一个套一的公寓，房间不大，使用面积大约只有 23 平方米多一点，不过厨房和洗手间一应俱全。这套房子是胡爽爷爷的学校按照爷爷职务补偿的，那时候处于计划经济的时期，学校里不同级别的老师对应着不同的房子居住面积，恰巧胡爽爷爷还缺一部分使用面积，因此学校就额外补偿了这个小的套一房子，正好留给了我结婚使用。当然我那时所在的企业也出自了一部分钱，算是给我的福利待遇了。这是我在中国计划经济时代里体会到的最直接的福利了。

胡爽就是在这里出生的。她的出生让爸爸和妈妈所在的两个家族都很高兴，因为她是两个家族里兄弟姐妹的第一个孩子。双方的父母都倾注了大把的热情和关爱给予胡爽，在胡爽的成长过程中，时不时的都会关照一下，生怕这个孩子不开心。





胡爽在这里度过了她快乐的童年。每天回家都需要经过楼后侧的两段长长的楼梯，上楼梯后便会到达楼下网点的顶层，足有 **200** 多平方米，在回家之前或平时都可以在这里滑旱冰、骑自行车等等运动，家里的空间小，在这里可以弥补一下了。

胡爽在这里的家住了6个春夏秋冬，从出生到上幼儿园的三年都是在这里度过的，2002年，胡爽上小学后因为接送孩子的问题，决定让姥爷和我们一起住，主要是负责胡爽上学的接送问题，因此在这个家东侧100多米的错埠岭三小区租了一处稍大一些的房子，好像是我和胡爽妈妈一间屋，姥爷和胡爽一间屋，不过胡爽有单独的床，是我以前在企业里自己制作的铁架子床。

在接送胡爽去幼儿园上学这件事上，胡爽爸爸做的较少，主要是胡爽妈妈负责。那时候家里还没有买车，妈妈几乎每个工作日都要抱着胡爽坐公交车或小公共汽车，再步行 200 多米送胡爽到幼儿园，然后再去公司上班。放学的时候一般是奶奶负责，因为奶奶家离幼儿园非常的近。那时候爷爷已经不在世了，奶奶也已经退休在家，正好可以作为一个新任务来

完成，实际上是帮了我们一个大忙。妈妈下班后到奶奶家里把胡爽抱回家或坐公交车。在单位里，女同志一般可以以接送孩子为借口晚去或早离开单位，也算是单位的一份额外照顾吧。

胡爽爸爸 1998 年底刚刚从企业调动工作到了一家香港独资企业，正处于努力工作、争取提升的关键时期，因此在胡爽接送的事情上做的不多。胡爽刚出生的时候，也就是我还没有进入这个单位前，当时正在一家国有企业工厂工作，那时候的企业效益不好，氯丁橡胶的销售受阻，产品积压，我经常会休假在家，因此胡爽上幼儿园之前在家的时间大多数是我在家照顾。现在看来，我和胡爽妈妈的工作高峰期是相互错开的，一个人忙时，另一个处于低潮期，因此也就始终有一个人可以照顾家里的事情，否则如果都忙的话就需要奶奶或姥姥姥爷来帮忙了。



胡爽在幼儿园的时光还是很开心的，不过偶尔也有不高兴的时候，更多的因素取决于与老师的关系。胡爽幼儿园有两个主要的负责老师，都姓王，一个叫大王老师，一个叫小王老师，其实都是年龄不大的青年女老师。不高兴的一次事情发生在大王老师要选几个孩子学弹电子琴，胡爽没有被选上，于是晚上回家后就显得不太高兴的样子，和妈妈说她其实她也想弹电子琴。妈妈一听，老师选弹琴的孩子怎么能没有自己的孩子呢？她一没生气，二没急躁，以她在机关工作的经验和效率，当晚就想好了如何解决这

个问题，并做好了充分的准备。然后对胡爽说，放心吧孩子，妈妈明天就去找老师，争取让你也去学弹琴。果然，妈妈第二天就找到了大王老师，并悄悄地把提前预备好的礼物奉上。于是，问题得到了完美解决，幼儿园为了鼓励胡爽的好学精神，又增加了一个学琴的名额，胡爽便高高兴兴地学了起来。

不仅如此，妈妈进一步升级了一下，没去买所谓的电子琴，而是一步到位，直接买了一架电钢琴。因为电子琴就是个玩具，音质和弹琴的指法与弹钢琴相差甚远，之所以这么做，胡爽妈妈是有长远的打算的，孩子上学后肯定会学习弹钢琴，在此之前学一下电钢琴就可以成为一个铺垫和提前练习，而电子琴则起不到这样的作用。



果然，胡爽白天在幼儿园练习电子琴，晚上回家练习弹电钢琴，兴趣就这样慢慢培养起来了。胡爽妈妈完美地解决了这个问题，还为胡爽将来学习钢琴，包括钢琴考级，做好了长远的规划。不久，家里搬新家后便正式买了钢琴，胡爽的小学、初中时期就是在一边学习，一边在课余时间练习弹钢琴的时光里度过的，在初中毕业前已获得了钢琴十级的水平。

胡爽上小学的时候，奶奶还找了熟人照顾。奶奶在青岛市的几个小学做过无数次班主任，对小学教育了如指掌，更是“桃李满天下”。胡爽去青岛师范附小报名时，奶奶也欣然前往，并和学校老师攀谈起来，介绍了她

的孙女也来上学，当然也得到了老师的格外重视。在师范附小上学的期间，倒是没有什么让胡爽不高兴的事情，倒是作为她爸爸的我，却惹过一个不大不小的麻烦。是这样的，胡爽进入二年级后课程逐渐复杂起来，作业也比较多，在中国就是这样，即便是小学低年级学生也早早地进入了题海战术的海洋里。

那时，班级里时不时会在课堂上进行“以考代练”式的考试，老师批阅后会发给每个学生，学生们回家后除了写当天的作业之外，还要先抄写试卷题目，再重新答一遍，以便增强记忆，杜绝今后再次做错题。再做一遍卷子我倒觉得无可厚非，但是每每都要再抄一遍卷子题目就有点儿过分了。孩子本来作业就要写到很晚，为了让胡爽尽快答题，卷子都是我或者她妈妈抄写，就是誊写一张和卷子同样大小的白纸，一般是三开纸大小，反正正面都有题目。有一天轮到我抄写卷子，越抄越觉得老师这是在“折磨”学生，而且让家长在做“无用功”。想到自己在单位哪里还会遭受这样的窝囊气，便抄起电话打给了胡爽的班主任，抱怨了一番。当时的班主任是迟老师，老师安慰了我一番，又让我体谅学校的难处，不能每次都复印试卷，工作量太大了，云云。

本以为事情就这么过去了，可让我们意想不到的事情悄悄发生了，隔了一天，胡爽回家说，老师不让她做小组长了，迟老师换了另外一个同学代替胡爽。美其名曰，胡爽学习压力大，应该专心学习，就不要做小组长为其他同学服务了。她妈妈说，你看你，对老师发脾气，还提什么合理化建议，那就是让班主任和学校难堪，这下子好了，你闺女的小组长让人家给“撸”了，你不仅没办法提意见，还得谢谢班主任体谅你孩子。

后来，还是胡爽妈妈解决了这个问题，没让胡爽受到更恶劣的影响。毕竟迟老师是女的，胡爽妈妈找时间单独去找了她，替我承认错误，顺便修复了关系。从此以后，我再也不敢多说话了，对外的事情还得是胡爽妈妈的方法比较得体。

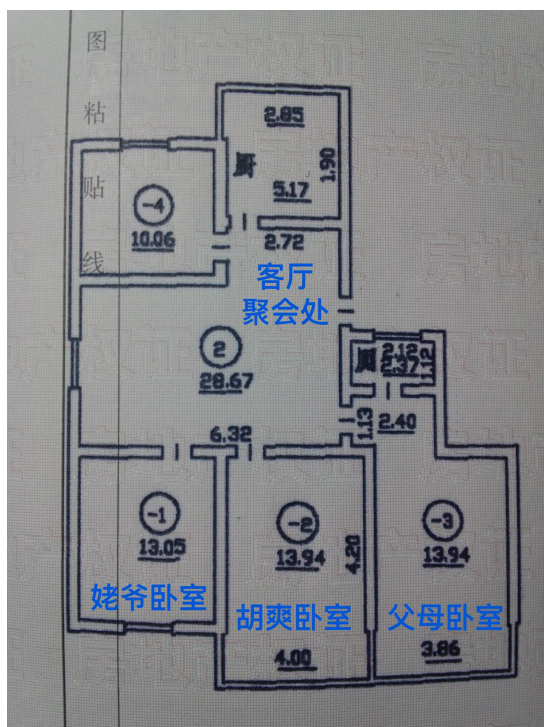
爷爷去世之后，奶奶仍然在她所在的教会聚会，参与服事。女儿上小学了，在奶奶家附近，奶奶帮助接孩子。2003年4月15日东平下班到奶奶家去接女儿，主动找到信主的婆婆要求信主。东平信了主，开始来到上帝面前疗伤，并且很认真地聚会，教会只要有聚会她就去，不用别人督促。在东平和孩子奶奶的双重“逼迫”之下我也来到了教会，是5月26日

决志信主的，在这个传统保守的家庭教会度过了八年的时光。当时教会的聚会场合不太固定，有时候在这个肢体的家，隔一段时间又得去另一个肢体的家，因为时不时还会有邻居提意见，比如唱赞美诗和大批量人员出入小区的“扰民”问题。最终，教会一个主要聚会点遇到了管理部门的压制，因此教会急需一处面积稍大，且可以安全聚会的房子使用。牧师和教会同工来到了我家，和我们协商到我们家聚会是否可以接待。当时我和妻子的灵命很弱小，身量有限。在危难之中我接受了下来，开放了自己的家庭。后来因东平接受不了牧者对待婚姻的态度决定离开那个教会，我们家也因此受到了来自教会的严重攻击和一些出于相互不理解而产生的行为。当然，这是后话了。

那时候胡爽妈妈信靠主的热情非常高涨，所以她在那年的夏天和奶奶顶着烈日跑了好多地方看房子。最终看好的是香港中路 147 号楼东侧的一套房子，符合教会的要求。于是，剩下工作的便由我出面和中介接触，联系业主希望购买，无奈这家的主人在外地，迟迟不能回来谈细节问题。但我们对这栋楼的户型非常喜欢，因为它东西两侧单元的房子都是大的套三房，且卧室均朝南，且该楼是独立的，不属于周边的任何小区管理，比较僻静，适合聚会。

为此，我自己打印了买房广告，挨个单元楼层贴，期望找到潜在的卖家。功夫不负有心人，终于西侧单元的一家人找到了我，他是继承父母的房子，如今在青岛东部买了自己的房子，于是打算不通过中介卖房子，这与我的想法高度契合。于是，买卖交易很快达成了，我们家如愿以偿地买到了自己心仪的房子。

我们是在 2003 年 9 月前后从错埠岭二路搬到了香港中路 147 号的楼上。刚才说过了，这套三室一厅的公寓，最大的优点是三间卧室均为南向。如图片中大楼的左手侧实际是楼的西面，只有一个窗户的位置是房间的厅，北侧依次为厨房和洗手间；南面的三间卧室从西向东依次是胡爽姥爷房间、胡爽房间和爸爸妈妈房间，就是图中红色线框内的位置，窗外分别有一个空调室外机。整栋楼位于马路边，因此有一些汽车噪音，但房间的窗户都是双层隔音玻璃，又加上在五楼，没有太大影响。



房间的厅里有沙发、餐桌，周日一早则被布置成可以多人聚会的样子，大家聚会时都比较安静，尽量不弄出大的声音，以免打扰周围邻居。不过还好，我们的对面邻居是一个常年在青岛开饭店的中年大叔，白天很少在家，一般晚上很晚才回家，基本上不会打扰到他。只有楼下的邻居曾见面时问过我，是不是在聚会，不过表示没什么。平时这栋楼的住户较少，大家彼此还算客气，因此我们家作为教会的接待家庭，持续了八年的时间，直到教会租借到了更大的聚会场所才停止。期间一直非常平和，也没有人来打扰过，是个蒙恩的地方。

胡爽从上小学起，姥爷也时不时担任着接送她上学的任务，很辛苦，也很感恩。我这个做女婿的也慢慢和岳父之间建立了深厚的情谊，姥爷成了家里不可或缺的重要一员。胡爽妈妈的姐姐和妹妹两家也时不时的在节假日过来聚餐，姊妹之间的三家人也因此融洽了很多。

如果说有什么遗憾的话，我会说，的确有，而且是我和胡爽妈妈共同的感受。我们从刚信主到热心服事，主动成为教会的接待家庭，也为教会奉献很多物力、财力，但也在忙忙碌碌的服事中忽略了一件事，那就是侧重于宗教形式方面的事情，却几乎没有时间去思考人真正的信仰该如何去践行。尤其是在中国这样一个对基督教信仰不太支持的大环境中，我们俩又都是共产党员，在各自的单位里还是业务骨干，如何践行基督信仰的确是我们，以及其他有类似身份的肢体需要认真思考的重要问题。也就是说，信仰在我们的生活中是一个选择项，而不是一个必须的选项，我们必须在工作职责和个人信仰之间作出取舍，而没有办法将其如鱼得水般的融为一体，直到我们俩依次从工作的枷锁中慢慢退出后，才渐渐将个人信仰摆到了首要位置。这并不是我们不懂得其中的道理，而是环境的逼迫和辖制，让我们不得不屈从于大环境。这种屈从，长期以来让我们的内心处于矛盾之中，以至于会一度迷惑了我们的判断，让日常的服事变得流于形式。我在个人博客 Husir.org 里写过很多篇文章，一边写，一边反思自己。不为别的，只为活出内外一致、言行一致的完整人格。

上面说过，胡爽上小学、初中的接送问题是姥爷负责解决的，但在休息日时，胡爽参加的各种兴趣班、补习班接送则是我的专利了，我很享受那些时候的接送任务。它让我可以在等待胡爽上课下课的过程中有时间观察那里的环境，思考自己的事情。更可以享受与孩子一起相处的时光，一

起吃饭、一起散步、一起讨论她遇到的问题……。其实，对我这么一个没什么婚姻经验的年轻人来说，忽然有一个孩子来到我们的生活当中时，那种惶恐和不知所措都无法和人诉说，只能在这一点一滴的生活细节中慢慢学习弥补。可让我们始料未及的是，这个孩子还在每天成长、每天进步，思想的成熟甚至超出了我们的想象。

胡爽是 2012 年决定出国的，家里人的想法也出奇的一致，总算是一家人面对了同样一个问题。可即便是同一个问题，解决的途径也不尽相同。胡爽在出国后的第一个学期对环境的陌生感和试图跳出困境的心理，我们当父母的只能按照以往的经验去猜测，却没有解决的标准答案。直到胡爽给我推荐了一本书之后，我和胡爽妈妈才有了共同的答案。

我记得是一个下午，我正开车从台东往家走，快到出入境管理局的快速路下坡那里，胡爽发信息，推荐给我她曾看过的一本书，斯科特·派克写的《少有人走的路》第一卷。回家后我找到了那本书，读后豁然开朗。家庭里每个人遇到的问题其实没有什么经验可以直接解决，需要的是每个人建立起独立自主、自律、主动学习的习惯，直面问题、直面自己，没有什么困难是无法解决的，解决不了的困难实际上是在提醒自己缺少了面对问题的勇气，大胆地去做，没有人可以限制你-----除了你自己。

我和胡爽妈妈都看了这本书，彼此也做过交流，也和孩子交流。得出的结论是，爸爸、妈妈、胡爽每个人都不能停止自我学习的动力，每个人都要在自我提升的路上不断给自己加油。尤其是爸爸妈妈，主要的职责不是去说教孩子，而要不断提升自己，用自己的行为给孩子做榜样。少有人走的路实际上是每个人都需要独自走的路，一条扎实的人生路。为此，我在此后的两年里，陆陆续续从网店里买了 50 多本书，在不同的场合送给了很多朋友，也希望他们能从说教孩子的固有模式中走出来，成为孩子的榜样。

胡爽远比我们想象的优秀，毕竟我们俩只有国内的生活和学习经验，而胡爽则凭自己的勇气，自己摸索着，一步一步完成了高中、大学的学业，独立面对了几乎所有在这个过程中出现的问题，并加以克服、解决，的确有一种爷爷奶奶当年闯荡青岛的勇气和心智。我和胡爽妈妈彼此之间都自嘲过好多次，我们既比不上爷爷奶奶、姥爷姥姥，又比不上胡爽，只是一味的呆在青岛，按部就班的在体制内工作，依赖体制生活，有些不思进取

的样子。毕竟一代人有一代人的利弊，虽然我们的工作被体制束缚着，但并不影响我们带胡爽出去旅游，胡爽妈妈和我带着她去过山东省内各地、北京、上海、九寨沟等，还有以色列、香港等。



胡爽家族情况

胡爽的爸爸妈妈

胡爽的妈妈

胡爽的妈妈，张东平，生于1969年6月15日（阴历己酉年五月初一，属鸡）。所以如果站在胡爽爸爸的视角来看妈妈的话，接下来的描述是这样的：她出生在青岛一个军人家庭。她的父亲是张静安，曾是一名军人，原籍江苏省如皋，南方人；母亲是王华荣，曾在青岛市第五印染厂工作，原籍山东省文登，北方人。胡爽妈妈是姐妹三个，她排行第二。她的父母工作都很忙，尤其是父亲，因为平时住在部队里，所以经常不在家。母亲既要工作又要操持家务，家庭的重担绝大部分落在母亲肩上。1968年2月，她的母亲生下了她姐姐张春红；一年四个月后又生下了她；她的爷爷奶奶受传统思想影响想一直希望要男孩，但事与愿违，在她快五岁时，1974年2月，她的母亲又生下了她妹妹张如玮。

抚养孩子的艰辛

在她出生后，她的外婆来到青岛，给母亲伺候完月子后，就把她姐姐带到烟台农村抚养，一直到六岁半才回到青岛（1974年8月）。她妹妹在一岁多时也被送到烟台农村抚养，三岁半回到青岛（1977年8月）。由于胡爽妈妈从小体弱多病，她的父母没有把她送到农村。虽然父母心中盼望有儿子，但并不妨碍他们对姐妹们的疼爱。特别是她的母亲，她是个特别好强的人，勤快能干、肯吃苦，她们小时候的吃穿比周围的孩子都要好，干净利落，有礼貌。她的母亲为家庭付出了很多艰辛，牺牲了自己，奉献了自己。

父母形象的错位

在胡爽妈妈的记忆中，她的父亲工作很忙，又加上部队离家远，一星

期才能回来一次，有时甚至半个月、一个月才回家一次。她的父亲是个随和的‘老好人’，但遇到问题总往后躲，拿他的口头禅说就是要“相信组织、相信党”。他遇事从不与别人争抢，这样的性格害得她母亲在涉及部队和家庭关系的问题上吃了很多苦头。她的母亲是个性格坚强、有爱心、有责任心的人，人际关系也很好。似乎一生都在为家庭活着，为别人活着，常常忘了自己。在胡爽妈妈的眼中，父亲的形象反而不高大，母亲的形象却很高大。

父母的偏爱

自从妹妹从烟台老家回来之后，胡爽妈妈慢慢发觉家里的好东西都要先给妹妹，凡事妹妹都享有特权。父母总是教导她们：姐姐要让着妹妹，因为她还小。随着年龄的增长，她的妹妹长得很可爱、聪明、乖巧，在学校里学习好、体育好、文艺好，给父母脸上争了很多光。

丑小鸭的无奈

胡爽妈妈和她姐姐相差一岁多，她俩的衣服款式都差不多，变化的是颜色、领子、样式……。她小时候长得又黑又丑，亲戚都夸她姐姐长得可爱。她的母亲按照自己的眼光给她们选衣服，她喜欢的衣服总得不到。比如有一年她母亲买了两套外贸出口的衣服，一套红色，一套绿色，她想要红色的，可她母亲却千方百计地说她穿绿色好看。她姐姐穿的红色衣服，人见人爱，人见人夸。还有一次她母亲做了两件衣服：一件圆领的“娃娃服”，一件方领的“列宁装”。她母亲把圆领的“娃娃服”给了她姐姐，哄着她穿方领的“列宁装”，其实她很不高兴。说到这，读者应该看出来，胡爽妈妈的母亲在无形中把她当作男孩儿来对待了。

当男孩养

她的个子比姐姐高，家里又缺男孩，在她上中学时，她母亲开始给她穿小号军装。因为她上初中时正是文革结束后的八十年代初期，也就是1982年前后，社会上流行穿军装，同学很羡慕。甚至有的男生向她索要军装。她和男生关系不错，课外活动时他们都把她当男生看待，她的性格也渐渐变得像男孩子。连她的名字也像男孩子的名字，可她却不喜欢。

所以说，父母看待孩子的眼光和对待孩子的方式往往带有很强的偏见，这些看法在孩子的心理造成的偏差，以及造成的一些潜在伤害，也会在多年后逐渐显现出来。

终生的遗憾

她们姐妹三人小学时都是班长，上初中时胡爽妈妈和她姐姐学习也不错，上高中后她们学习上遇到了困难（1985年前后），不知如何面对。碰巧这时她外婆得了癌症，她母亲（也就是胡爽的姥姥）是外婆孩子中最孝顺最能干的一个，一门心思给外婆治病，忽略了她和她姐姐的关键时期。从她外婆得病到去世，前后大约三年时间，正好是在她们俩的整个高中阶段。她们也正处于青春期，很迷茫也很无助，一直没处理好自己的学习障碍和解决办法，最终她和她姐姐都没考上大学，留下了终生的遗憾。庆幸的是后来她妹妹考上了大学，父母得了些安慰。后来胡爽妈妈婚后利用业余时间学习取得了本科文凭。

开始工作

不出所料，1987年高中毕业时，东平没有考上大学，她爸妈联系她小姨，到烟台的牟平一中复读了一年。1988年再次参加高考，也没有考中。那时候我已经上了大学，读了一年级。东平的母亲，也就是后来我的岳母，其实在我高三春节去拜年的时候对我就有好感，对其他来拜年的男生则态度冷淡，只默许我们俩继续交往，所以我们就慢慢的交往下来了。东平去烟台复读期间，我们只能写信交往，但不是非常频繁，毕竟不是谈感情的时候。

东平回来青岛之后，她父亲就是后来我的岳父，很快就在1989年5月份（20岁）帮东平在新开业仅四个多月的东海商场找了份营业员的工作。东海商场是在青岛市鞍山路和镇江路东南角儿的一座白色建筑，共五层，每层有一千多个平方，这个商场是当时比较新颖的一个模式。因为当时青岛市有几大百货商店都是传统模式，而东海商场却是一种很新的模式，它采用的是那种开放式的柜台，而且是岛城首家设有自动扶梯的商场，商品种类丰富，营业员年轻靓丽，处处透着现代化商场的气息，市内外居民蜂拥而至。东平和一帮年轻的伙伴们交往的非常密切，也是她人生当中第一

次认识了那么多朋友。服务员都很年轻，我也跟着东平得到了很多特殊待遇，时不时的从各个柜台的伙伴那里优惠价买点点心、香肠、中德啤酒等等。

我在这其中也认识了几个她的好朋友，名字我记不太清了，但其中联系比较多的是宋涛。宋涛和东平年龄相仿，也是从认识后一直保持着联系，我们买家具时一般都会找她帮忙。但东平生病的那几年直到去世，正巧宋涛在 2019 年也经历了一年多的身体状况，所以就没有顾得上彼此联系，但东平和我唠叨最多的还是宋涛，但碍于病情，她也没有联系宋涛，两个好朋友就这样错过了。

东平在东海商场工作了整整一年的时间，1990 年 6 月（21 岁），东平父亲通过熟人介绍推荐她调到青岛电机厂。青岛电机厂是个那个年代里不太起眼的小厂，成立于 1980 年，厂长是刘笃宪，原来的门牌号是四方区西吴家村 472 号，位于现在的海泊河北岸。具体说，在青岛海慈医院往东南方向有条小路西吴一路，往里走大约 200 米在路南是青岛二十中学，现在改为了青岛经济职业学校，再往前走 100 多米就是原青岛电机厂的位置，现在是澳桦园居民小区。

虽然她没考上大学，她参加入厂招工考试的分数很高，以第一名的成绩进了青岛电机厂。她参加了厂里组织的诗歌朗诵会、演讲比赛、硬笔书法比赛……，代表厂参加青岛市机械局演讲比赛，并获得了一等奖，在企业中很快脱颖而出。在电机厂的一次团代会选举中，她得了第三名的票数。由于第一、二名都是企业的技术骨干不愿意从事团的工作。党委书记便找她谈话，她也很纠结，当时她正在供应科学习统计。科长知道这一情况，很支持她去做团的工作。于是她 21 岁就成为一名企业团的负责人，也就是团支部书记。

上任后，她以企业经济工作为中心，配合党政组织青年职工开展了各种活动：青工技术比武、节能降耗、各种文体活动……，均得到了各级领导的肯定和认可。在机械局团委组织的一次文艺汇演中，她组织了一个青年时装模特队参加演出，轰动全局，为企业争得了荣誉，此后厂领导非常支持团的工作。后来市团委选送优秀团干部到中央团校学习，她也有幸去北京参加了学习。回来后，她被局领导借调到局机关帮忙，最后留在了局机关工作。

令人羡慕的妻子

胡爽妈妈和我是高中同学，都在青岛十六中学，她是从初一到高三都在十六中，而我则是高中期间在十六中上学。其实我虽然是班长，但高中的三年里我们俩却很少说话，只知道她和另外两个女生一般都是和班里的几个男同学关系更融洽一些，似乎是一个小团体。我作为班长需要公平一些，所以我不属于任何一个小团体。东平那时候的性格偏外向，而我偏内向，用刚才的标准说，我们俩的朋友圈都不一样。毕业后，好奇的同学们听说我们俩走到了一起，都很诧异，尤其是她的那个小团体。

1987年夏天，我考上了大学，她很仰慕我，反过来她乐观自信的性格也吸引我。性格的差异反而让我们走得更近，我们的恋爱过程进展顺利，这也是上帝的安排。她气质活泼，人品很好，是老师眼中的好学生，而我是同学眼中的好班长，男生眼中的好伙伴。当年收到大学录取通知书的同学都奔走相告，传递喜讯。她的母亲也见过一些我们班考上大学的同学。但当我去她家报告喜讯时，她母亲一看见我就很喜欢我。

我们恋爱后，她母亲有时对待我比她这个女儿还好，我对她母亲也很好。她母亲还时不时到我当时上学的青岛化工学院，送去营养品，还会给我一些零花钱。前面说过，她的母亲特别想要一个儿子，因此我的出现似乎预示着我们的关系更像母子关系。八年的恋爱，水到渠成，1995年10月的国庆节，我们顺利步入了婚姻的殿堂。

亲人的相继离世给了她致命的打击

我的父亲是一所中学的副校长，东平在恋爱期间去我家吃饭时，我父亲就给我们讲人生的价值，做人的道理……，我和弟弟都不认真听，胡爽妈妈反而听得津津有味。后来她说她的父亲从没给她讲这些，她获得了不少益处，也算是缺失父爱的一点补偿。胡爽妈妈在借调局机关工作期间，人事关系还在企业，就是青岛电机厂，当时她打算等人事关系调进局机关后再结婚。后来因为我父亲得了重病，我们便匆匆忙忙结了婚。中国历来有个说法，子女的婚事会给家里生病的老人带来好运气。第二年女儿出生了，我父亲（公公）见到了孙女，在女儿一岁三个月时我父亲去世了……。家里有爷爷抱胡爽的照片，逢年过节时也一起吃过饭，胡爽可以走路的时候

候常到爷爷奶奶家串门。好像是在 1997 年，记得有一次爷爷需要眼镜，让胡爽去另一个房间取回来，递给了爷爷，那蹒跚走路的样子依然在我脑海中。



另一个打击接踵而来：女儿出生五个半月时，她母亲查出了癌症，做了手术。二年后复发转移，在女儿四岁十个月时她母亲去世了（2001年4月）。胡爽妈妈和她母亲的关系很紧密，她母亲可以说是她们家的精神支柱。她母亲走后，她彻底崩溃了，对外封闭不沟通，感觉上帝在惩罚她们家，抱怨上帝对她们家不公平，把我们家优秀的两个家长取走了……，也许上帝那里也需要做事勤快的人吧。

在机械局的辛勤工作

1998年1月到2003年9月跟随丁建华处长做综合统计工作；2003年9月（34岁）到2005年4月做工会干事，之后又做工会出纳；在东平做综合统计的后期开始，她又在妹妹一家的帮助下到了青岛理工大学夜大班学习，并于2005年7月（36岁）取得了会计学本科学历。于是在2006年4月，凭借在工会出纳的经历和所取得的专业学历，东平被财务处阎处长（女）看中，遂调到了财务处做出纳，一直做到2007年10月。

东平从上学的时候就写的一手好字，虽是女生但字迹却能“抑扬顿挫、棱角分明、错落一致”，尤其是在财务出纳的工作岗位期间，那一笔娟秀的小字让见到的人无不拍手称赞。说句题外话，东平的字可以写的很小，但依旧隽秀，如果字写大一些的话和我父亲的字迹有几分像，但东平的字更多的会让人联想到“小家碧玉的优雅品质”。我曾开玩笑的说过东平：你写个字还费那么多劲儿干嘛，写个“一”字都得拐好几个弯。我写的话就是“一划”，笔划多了就多“划”几下，多简单。后来我想，东平写字都是这么缜密的下笔，正如同她思考问题的方式，方方面面、上上下下的因素都能照顾到。

字如其人，东平扎实的工作给历任局、处领导留下了深刻的印象，2007年10月（38岁），东平被调到了局办公室做办公室文书。这里的工作要求更加细致，同时也要求所写文案可以把握市、局形式，这样的工作平台给东平带来的压力可想而知。

东平和我结婚后一直到胡爽上小学都在伊春路住，机械局当时在湖南路37号，位于中山路和湖南路交叉口西北角的小楼，北面是百盛商场、南面是发达商厦，购物非常方便，更不用说中山路及其周边的风景和店铺了。东平在这里上班除了离家远一些外，对单位的工作和周边环境还是很

珍惜的。她先后又在局里的统计处、工会、财务处和办公室工作过，深受好评。工作之余也跟着局领导和同事尝遍了周边的美食，更是经常抽空给胡爽买学习用品和衣服等。要知道，女生能在工作期间抽空给孩子和家里人做点什么事是她们最开心的。2003年4月，这个位置根据市里的规划拆了重建，机械局遂搬到了福州北路10号五楼。2011年4月，根据市政府资产安排，机械工业公司划归青岛市华通集团公司。

东平在统计处工作的时间比较长，约有五年八个月吧，期间需要经常和青岛市统计局直接打交道，本职工作是负责青岛市机械行业内20多个单位的经营数据汇总、整理和分析上传。东平本身就是个认真的人，所以她的统计工作做的非常扎实，和统计局负责该业务的吴洪文配合的也很默契。要知道机关里的数据统计不仅仅是简单的数字累加，更是要表达出行业的发展势头和潜力，所有的数据都要经得起各级领导的“认可”和“推敲”，也正是东平所具备的敏锐洞察力，她早早发现了这个“业务方针”，其报表和分析深受市统计局吴处长和局领导陈局长、丁建华处长的好评。

后来，因着扎实的工作表现她又在机械局的其他的部门工作过，跟随的部门领导有财务处的阎处长（女）、工会主席（名字忘了）和办公室的孙明铭处长。东平的工作特点就是非常的认真，用现在的话来说，就是虽然她的学历不高，但工作热情、认真程度和情商都非常高。最关键一点，也是东平最耗费心血的，就是她对于方方面面人情世故的把握非常准确，不卑不亢，收放自如。这可能也是受我岳父岳母的影响吧，这些素质在局机关工作是非常需要的。东平在办公室时的两个大姐刘燕妮和李明霞对她帮助很大，姐妹三个时不时的就会去保定路31号的红辣椒唐记清水鱼吃饭，十多年不间断。当然，这个饭店也是我和东平常去解馋的场所。

刚才提到过东平的学历，实际上最终是2005年青岛理工大学颁发的成人高等教育会计专业本科，这在很大程度上受益于东平妹妹张如玮的丈夫徐科峰，他是青岛理工大学建筑学教授，也是借助他的协助，把这个本科文凭学出来了，也的确对她的工作起到了关键作用。

疲劳过度的工作

就像上面所说的，东平在机械工业总公司的工作是高强度的脑力劳动，从大约1998年（29岁）入局到2013年内退，中间经历了一次机械局的搬

迁，从中山路搬到了福州路 99 号，就在广播电视大厦的北面。十三年的工作让东平不堪重负。为了融入局里的工作，她积极利用业余时间学习，并于 2009 年 10 月 30 日获得了“政工师”资格，之前还学习了会计学本科课程。

真正让东平“倒下来”的是偶然的，也是意料之中的。我印象中应该是 2010 年 10 月，那段时间她要给局长准备在市里开会的发言稿，她们办公室从上到下都在为这个发言稿准备，据说改了十几个版本，已是精疲力尽。有一天我还去了她的办公室，东平正在为开会复印材料，一份份、一张张材料，摆放的整齐有序。我当时还笑话她，至于这么严谨吗？差不多就行了呗。可她却不敢马虎，仍然井井有条的整理材料。

我记不清过了几天，反正有一次她头一天晚上吃饭吃的不是特别好，又加上第二天早晨没吃饭，但局里仍然在为局长的发言稿忙活，不光是东平，反反复复修改了十几遍的稿子也让办公室其他人也疲惫不堪，又加上东平的内心有一些抑郁倾向。是的，那时候她已经有了抑郁的状态。所以，第二天她上班后又忙活了一阵子后，终于在下午，在去洗手间的走廊上忽然晕倒了。她单位的同事赶紧给我打电话，我就紧急过去，一起把东平送到了青岛市东部市立医院急诊室。我们就在急诊室做了检测，查出了慢性萎缩性胃炎，以及神经紧张、低血糖导致的虚弱，所以出现了晕厥的情况。在医院住了几天之后，慢慢的恢复了体力，就回家休息了一段时间。

再后来，因为东平也是迫于这个局里边各种人事关系压力，还有自己总怕做不好工作被领导挑剔，因而付出的太多、太辛苦。每天神经都是高度紧张，需要眼观六路，耳听八方，又加上办公室这样的核心部门，需要揣测领导的各种关系利弊，非常的疲惫。最终，东平和我商量好，出院后不再去上班，毕竟身体要紧，就这样东平开始了请病假的状态。

病休和内退

剩下的事就是我来做了，那就是一直给她请假。每次到医院开的病假条是半个月时间，所以要记住时间不间断的定期去医院开病假条，然后到按照机械局的请假范本填写病假条申请，附上病假条后送到东平单位。当时东部市立医院请病假不太方便，我们就找到了东平以前做肛肠手术的杨军大夫，她当时在市北区医院，当时地处泰山路 68 号。杨军大夫很年轻、

帅气，也比较随和，当我们说明情况后，他便答应了，正好东平也需要定期开一些肠胃方面的药，所以我就在杨军大夫这里替东平就诊、开病假条。手续都是符合要求的，东平也在那些年积极转换思路，调养身体、转换心态。这个过程大约持续了两年多时间，直到2013年5月9日（44岁）是最后一次请假。

2013年4月11日，东平所在的局办公室处长孙明铭找我谈，他当然是代表局领导的意见办事，和我说我每次这么请假其实也很辛苦，看样子东平也不能上班了，不如就办理一个内退吧，签一个协议。我觉得这是个好事儿，所以东平跟我商量之后我们就签了这个协议。协议是5月23日签的，约定从2013年6月1日起开始内部退养，直到法定退休年龄为止，工资为青岛市最低生活保障的80%，但依然缴纳社会保险。那天我是和东平一起去的，那时的机械局已经归属青岛华通集团管理了，但这些都和我们没有关系了，反正之后我们就不用再请假了，也是件对我们便利的事情。直到东平2019年（50岁）正式办理退休，这中间有6年多的时间。办理内退后，档案关系便转到了连云港路52号的华通企业托管中心，直到后来办理退休等手续都是我到这里办理的。

相爱容易相处难

婚姻是美丽爱情的归宿，从恋爱到婚姻，是我们每个人梦寐以求的追求。我们（胡爽的父母）谈了八年恋爱，应该说有一定的感情基础。自从家里发生重大变故，胡爽妈妈的内心承受了巨大的悲痛，使原本乐观自信的她突然变得消极压抑，好多年走不出来，这也直接影响到我们的婚姻。她内心渴望我理解她、安慰她、呵护她……，我一开始能忍住自己的悲痛，接纳她的情绪，时间长了我也受不了了。我们时不时争吵、冷战……，我经常喝酒、拼命工作、以各种理由逃离家庭，她则把精力放在照料孩子、工作上，两人形同陌路，家里没有温暖。

我们在各自工作领域里有了些转机，进入2001年我开始被提拔，胡爽妈妈也获得了很多部省市级荣誉，孩子一天天长大，我们都在努力维持着婚姻，貌似幸福，但她的内心却没有感到幸福。她开始阅读关于婚姻方面的书籍：《幸福家庭10块基石》《幸福婚姻圣经》《相爱的秘密》《盟约》《妻子荣耀的帮助者》……，还参加了一些婚姻讲座：《亲密之旅》、

《家庭生活的真谛》……，她一直用高尚的道德标准要求自已，内心却找不到幸福的感受。偶然的机会，她开始接触到心理学方面的知识，对心理咨询师开始感兴趣。

她对心理咨询师这个职业进行了关注并开始学习。从最初的接触到开始学习有关心理学方面的知识和信息，她认为这是一门很实用的学科。通过学习，她知道了在自己成长过程中所遭受的困难与苦恼的来源，学会解读自己过去那种内心不被理解时的孤独和无助感，她的困惑和纠结一点点减少，找到了很多问题的答案；她和我分享她学习的感受和收获，我们的关系逐渐变得越来越好，我也对心理问题越来越关注；她又尝试解读我父亲和她母亲在最后日子的一些心理心态变化。有报道说，其实每个正常人的体内都存在着情绪的致癌细胞，只是有的人会发病，而有的会自行得到控制，绝大多数癌症病人是因为心态及心理的变化对病情的变化至关重要。这与心理的健康和心态的调整是密不可分的。

随着社会竞争压力的增大，生活节奏的加快，使人们产生了许多困惑和烦恼，而心理咨询师能很好地帮助其缓解或调整这些心理问题和心理冲突。这是一项助人自助的职业，既能帮助别人又能使自己心理走向健康、人格趋于完善。这就是她多年来一直寻找的，也是她想要的职业。

通过学习，胡爽妈妈知道要成为一名合格心理咨询师应具备的个性品质：善良、乐观、真诚、热情、独立、具有亲和力、富有合作精神，以积极的心态对待生活，对自己作出正确的评价。在日常生活中，为人处事要保持心态平和，能够较好地控制和调节自己的情绪，具有良好的人际关系。

她开始运用心理咨询方面的知识来调节自己，并采取一定的方法释放自己，如：听音乐、运动等。面对自己心理难以解决的问题，她会寻求督导师的帮助来加以解决。东平想要将自己的心态调整好，这个方向是没问题的，按照我的想法，只要带着东平到处转转，换个环境，让自己远离在体制内的那些紧张、变态的心理折磨，逐渐回归正常生活就可以了。但东平比我想的更进一步，她从请病假那时开始便逐渐开始了心理学的学习。我记得东平在人民路小村庄南侧，阜新路 33 号良机宾馆 338 室学习过，还在台东一路 116 号的楼上学习过，在这些地方上课时都是我开车接送。2013 年 9 月 1 日还到北京富来宫温泉山庄学习过，这次是她和其他青岛的

同学一起去的，我没去。在人民路学习的学校是四方慧之源心理服务中心，负责人葛源一直从事心理咨询和教学，东平和她联系很多，也很受益。

经过不懈的努力，东平分别通过了心理咨询师三级考试和二级考试，并于 2015 年 3 月 10 日获得了国家“心理咨询师二级”的职业资格证书。

说到这里，有个问题，东平学习心理学对自己的身心康复有益处吗？答案是肯定的。学习的过程很辛苦，也充满了生活的乐趣，更是能或多或少的联系到自己的心理状况去比对，但最终是否有益处我想只有在学完之后体会更深一些。之所以这么说是出于我这个旁观者的观察，我觉得东平学了心理学之后对自身的心理伤害和坎坷有了一个理论性的认识，在心理康复的路上又进了一大步。我认为，东平那些年产生的心理问题和抑郁状态最多有 20% 是自己造成的，至少 60% 是来自于我的岳父和岳母。这其中来自于我岳母的影响要多一些，还有 20% 来自于后天我们俩共同的悟性不够，或者说是信仰的理解肤浅，以及对罪悔改的程度不够造成的。

所以说，东平学心理学能够对自己那部分不足有了认识，也有些许提升，但来自于原生家庭的伤害是每个人终极一生都很难靠自己的能力将其变为自己人生的祝福，东平也是这样。从小到大来自于骨子里的人生观和价值观，以及所处的家庭关系都无法让一个人逃出原生家庭的束缚。好在东平和我都意识到了这个问题，因着每个人情感的软弱性，极少有人会真正彻底摆脱原生家庭成员的一举一动和感情互动带来的影响，宁愿持守那份感情也不愿意借此摆脱这些情感的方式让自身的悟性升华。

所以，从这个角度来讲，人也需要对神的崇拜，那份对至高者的尊敬让我们将其他一切看为平常。东平与单位疏远之后，她的身体和情绪恢复都比较好，究其根本我们所在教会的作用非常关键。

个人的身心调整

从东平在机械局请病假开始，到她办理内退直至正式退休的近十年的时间里，她也一直没闲着。刚才说过，她在机械局那样高度耗费心思的场合，心情远比在东海商场那里郁闷，而她又比较要强，以致在现实工作当中处处感受到压抑，而她又因着信仰原则不愿意舍身融入那些复杂关系的染缸，这种既不被认可，又执着追求的矛盾是导致抑郁的根源。

这样的结果也是在情理之中，为了东平的工作与信仰的关系我们讨论过很多次，都从心里接受了。自从 2003 年 4 月 15 日（34 岁）她接受了我母亲传播的基督之爱后，她在单位里表现得非常决绝，从之前局里聚餐时和领导同事拿着白酒推杯换盏，喝到不省人事被同事送回家，到谢绝所有类似聚会，即便推不掉参加了也滴酒不沾，只在本职工作中尽职尽责，做到极致，所以在没有特殊关系、没有献媚领导的情况下，能在机械局这样的单位立足并被肯定已是不易了，但要进一步提拔则需要付出的更多，而这一些是东平和我所不能接受的，因而适时选择“退出”是最好的选择。剩下的事就是经常利用周末的时间我开车带着她在省内到处转，目的是经常换换我们的环境改善心境。我们去了很多地方，每次一个地方，每次一两天的时间，比如烟台、威海、诸城、寿光、平度、莱西等等这些地方我们都去过，而且不止一次。到了之后，在那里逛一逛，吃点当地饭菜，找地方住一、两天，如果碰到节假日或春节假期，我们最喜欢去的地方还是上海，有三、四次是带上我岳父，从青岛开车 8、9 个小时到江苏如东老家，然后我们俩再去上海住几天。还有就是 2015 年带着姥爷、奶奶和佳音开车去苏州、上海、扬州等地方





东平最喜欢的城市是上海，她说自己一半血统是南方人，而上海无论是气候、人文还是城市风格都是东平向往的。我们在上海最喜欢住的地方有两个，一个是海悦滨江公寓，在东方路、昌邑路东南角上，我们一般住在29层或30层，往西可以看到东方明珠，往北可以看到黄浦江；海悦的公寓没有房间时我们便会去住麦新格精品酒店，位于源深路、乳山路西北角，是个风格比较新潮的酒店，酒店旁边有个饭店，南浔世家，典型的南方菜系，东平非常喜欢，尤其是里面的细面条，一小盆，配几个菜，两人吃非常惬意。

我们最后一次准备去上海的时间是 2017 年春节，原本订了腊月三十的飞机去海悦滨江酒店住，不巧的是我在腊月二十九早晨送姥爷去四方长途汽车站后，在回家路上出现心梗症状，当天傍晚前后做了支架手术。之后，我和东平再也没有去上海。

东平和我通过更换环境体验生活是一方面，对抑郁状态的改善有一定的效果，毕竟这也是我们俩生活的一部分。

心理咨询师学习与生活

从最初接触，到开始学习心理学方面的知识和信息，她就认为这是一门非常实用的学科。通过学习，她逐渐明白了自己在成长过程中所经历困难与苦恼的根源，学会了重新解读过去那种内心不被理解时的孤独与无助感。随着困惑与纠结一点点减少，她找到了许多问题的答案。东平也会和我分享自己的学习感受与收获，两人之间的关系因此越来越好，也引起了他对心理问题的关注。她还尝试用所学知识，去解读公公与母亲在生命最后阶段的心理变化。

有报道指出，其实每个正常人体内都存在致癌细胞，只是有的人会发病，而有的人会自行控制。绝大多数癌症病人的病情变化，与心态及心理变化密切相关，这也与心理健康和心态的调整密不可分。

东平觉得，随着社会竞争压力的增大与生活节奏的加快，人们产生了许多困惑与烦恼，而心理咨询师能够帮助他们有效缓解或调整这些心理问题与心理冲突。这是一项“助人自助”的职业，既能帮助别人，也能让自己走向心理健康、人格趋于完善。这正是她多年来一直在寻找、也是她真正想要的职业。

通过学习，她了解到一名合格的心理咨询师应具备的个性品质：善良、乐观、真诚、热情、独立、富有亲和力、具有合作精神，能以积极的心态对待生活，并能对自己作出正确的评价。在日常生活中，她努力保持平和的处事态度，能够较好地控制和调节自己的情绪，拥有良好的人际关系。她开始运用心理咨询方面的知识来调节自己，并采取一些方法释放压力，比如听音乐、运动等。当遇到自己难以解决的心理问题时，她会主动寻求督导师的帮助。

她意识到，要想成为一名合格的心理咨询师，不仅要有丰富的心理学知识、咨询技能以及必要的法律法规知识，还要能克服自己性格上的某些弱点，以职业性的理智态度严格要求自己，在咨询中始终保持中立的态度，无条件地接纳来访者，并能够理性看待咨询过程中的挫折。在遇到问题需要帮助时，能够积极争取高级心理咨询师的督导与支持，以认真严谨的态度对待每一位来访者。同时，她也会加强对职业道德的学习，强化自身的职业道德修养，这不仅有助于树立咨询师的良好形象，更重要的是为来访者创造一个值得信赖的咨询环境。

东平希望今后可以接受更专业、系统的学习和培训，掌握更多的专业知识与诊断、咨询技能；进一步提高个人的心理素质，以正确的态度对待心理咨询工作，逐步积累自己的经验。她明白，心理咨询师的成长需要勇于承担责任、敢于面对挑战，她会以一颗平常心去对待，在学习和体验中不断成长。

成为一名优秀的心理咨询师，是她今后发展的方向，也是她人生中的一个重要目标。她知道，未来的学习道路还很漫长，助人者先自助——只有先让自己成长起来，才有可能去帮助他人，成为他人的祝福。

信仰与生活

胡爽妈妈在个人信仰方面的追求是我见过的信徒里面非常认真、刻苦的人之一。在我母亲的影响和带领下，我们俩都是在 2003 年信主，她比我早近一个半月。自从我们进入王弟兄的家庭教会以来，她的服事热情也带动了其他弟兄姐妹的服事。不仅热心读经、学习祷告，还把在单位里的组织才干发挥了出来。在教会历年的圣诞节纪念晚会演出活动中，每年都能编排出不一样的节目，深受教会同工们的好评，感恩。除此之外，还积极为教会物色聚会地点，说服我，将家里买的房子或租的房子无偿提供给教会聚会使用。前后两次，一次是为王弟兄的教会，另一次是为 3G 仰望教会，合计达十二年之久。

这里要提到的是发生在这间教会里两件让胡爽妈妈觉得遗憾的事情，一是胡爽奶奶给她外甥传了福音，他先参加完初信慕道班，没参加几次主日崇拜就被公司派到外地工作三年，那期间便断了聚会。回来后因他弟弟和女朋友决定要结婚，按烟台莱阳农村的当地习俗，哥哥结婚后弟弟才能

结婚。这个当哥哥的在外派期间谈了一个来自东北的女朋友，可他妈妈却不接受这个女孩，要求我母亲给他大儿子介绍女朋友。由于婆婆和东平希望他找主内的姊妹，便给他介绍了一位教会里的姊妹，可由于感情基础和婆媳关系等问题，结婚不到2年就离了婚；还有一件事，东平因着对他人关系的界限把握的不够准确，无意中成了教会牧者及其他肢体婚姻问题的倾听者，即当师母一方和她诉说她的婚姻中出现的一些问题，以及教会内一些弟兄姐妹在婚姻中的挣扎，青年弟兄姐妹婚恋观的迷茫。由于她自己对圣经也不熟悉，灵命处于婴儿阶段，凭着单纯出于自己血气的热情去帮助别人，无意中伤害了自己，也伤害了别人。经历这些事情后，东平意识到，家庭以及婚姻问题的出现及解决，涉及复杂的心理和圣经知识装备才能介入，不是靠单纯的热情就能解决的。通过这些矛盾的经历，她也更坚定了她今后几年学习心理学和圣经真理的决心。

在经历了教会架构变迁和上面所说的失败经历后，除了学习心理学，考取心理咨询师证，她毅然下决心自己寻求学习圣经的途径，从2014年开始，依次参加了韩国牧师李鸾校长组织的DTS（门徒训练）、SBS（圣经研究）、FCS（家庭治疗或商谈）学习，并获得结业证书。由于那时已经内退在家，因此时间相对充裕，学习起来也格外用功，期间还到韩国济州岛的敬拜学校学习，领略了韩国牧师的敬业和为福音传播的热情，参加过山东省内和菲律宾的布道旅行，收获颇丰。



现在让我回想东平自 2003 年信主以来的经历，尤其是在生命的最后四年，从 2019 年 2 月 1 日发现疾病到 2022 年 12 月 15 日凌晨被主接走，在病痛之中与主同行、不离弃主、靠主的话语坚定自己的心智，每每想起

那时候的一个个场景，心中感慨万千。刚信主的时候，虽然热情非常高涨，但由于对圣经真理了解的太少，加上被体制规则约束的比较紧，对基督信仰的追求其实还是比较懵懂的，不光是东平，连我也是这样。在教会的服事过程中，常常误以为多为教会做事，多帮助其他弟兄姐妹解决一个个困难便是与主同行，这种建立在血气之上的服事往往会在自己闲暇时分产生寂寞感。那种感觉是什么呢？不是真正的寂寞，而是那种忽略了自己内心真实感受，甚至会掩盖自己的真实想法和做法，一味地迎合其他肢体的需求。经历疾病时才发现，那些被忽略的感受似乎是一下子被人堆在了自己面前，无法逃避，不得不面对，那一时刻的祷告和悔改愿望是那么的迫切，却又难以实现。是的，这种历年来累计下来的，被忽略的内心感受实际才是我们每个人真正需要面对的。人在疾病面前是最真实的，想着历年来那一个个被祷告出来的悔改事项，一次又一次的被自己的血气战胜，一次又一次的被沉积下来，沉积到自己的内心深处，以至于新的悔改祷告在病痛面前是那么苍白和无力。

如果要重新来过的话，我们会认真面对生活和工作中的每一个问题，不会忽略二人之间任何不愉快的感觉，及时的提出来，两个人坦诚面对并共同讨论，共同解决这些问题。“生气却不要犯罪，不可含怒到日落，”（以弗所书 4:26 和合本），夫妻之间最容易产生缝隙的问题便是，那些看起来不起眼的小问题、不好的感受，被一次次的压在自己心底，不愿意说出来，甚至冷战。长久下来便会成为熟悉的“陌路人”。

我以前属于脾气急躁的那一类人，比较直爽，这样的性格好的一方面是，碰到问题时解决速度快，坏的一方面是容易让自己的身体激动。不喜欢和别人沟通，喜欢独断，但又会对事情不由自主的担心和焦虑，长年累月下来当然会进一步对身体的潜在机能造成不良影响。东平属于办事风风火火的那一类人，但是又特别胆小，比起我的急躁，她其实更容易产生担心焦虑的情绪，可又会在外人面前假装坚强，是个不愿意轻易认输的性格。宁可自己委屈也会替别人解决问题，而忽略自己的实际情况。我的身体亏损是在四十岁左右发现自己的血压逐年增高，心血管以堵塞而发出呼救信号；东平的身体亏损发生在脾胃的虚弱以及由此引起的气血耗损，直到造血功能降低而发出呼救信号。事情过去之后，人才会明白一个道理，那些悔改不及时的事情，终究会成为让人后悔的根源。

其实中国基督徒一直在走一条和国外基督徒不一样的道路，那就是没有悔改的信仰，终究会被自己的所谓秉性和脾气所战胜，那种表面上的信仰，无论是基督教还是佛教，最终会在中年时期被自己亲手培养的坏习惯打垮。这些信徒的所谓信仰实际上是一种和体制权利博弈的心理安慰剂，而不是真正意义上的人生信仰。从夫妻的角度来看，每个人在日常的反思和祷告中被发现的问题，是否能够被完美解决，这是夫妻间能否长久达成一致，身心灵是否和谐的关键。这几年我对胡爽说的最多的一句话是，生活的目的是为了自由和快乐，要设法让自己开心起来，经常反思自己遇到的问题，把它们写下来，再想办法逐个解决，暂时解决不掉的先绕开。

在东平生病的四年间，我们对人生的感悟，胜过了以前信主十六年的总和，即便是这样，我们依然很难做到悔改自己不符合圣经真理的地方，不知是我们的决心不够坚定，还是体制的压力太大，让我们无法突破现实中的自己，在这个环境中，真的很难突破。

附加一个机械局的一个评价

关于胡爽妈妈的综合情况先介绍这一些，下面是 2008 年底来自公司的一段评价：但这个评价看起来充满了“中国政党特色”，因为中国是中国共产党领导下的所谓社会主义国家，很多地方的称谓和对一个人的描述都与美国等国家相差巨大，在此几乎“原封不动”的写出来，也是为了让读到的人对这个国家和企业的管理方式有全面的了解，这样的评价不仅仅发生在胡爽妈妈那里，也发生在胡爽爸爸、爷爷、姥爷等体制内工作的任何一个人，是时代的一个缩影。

组织评价：

张东平同志自 1989 年参加工作以来，先后从事过企业团委、总公司综合统计、工会干事、工会出纳、财务部出纳、办公室文书等工作岗位。工作作风一贯严谨，为人正直，作风正派，不谋私利，顾全大局。始终注重学习专业理论知识，不断加强自身修养，积极开展思想政治工作，努力提高自身素质，具有较强的工作能力，受到领导和同事们的广泛认可。

该同志在 1991 年至 1997 年担任青岛电机厂团委负责人期间，创办了团刊《晨露》，受到广泛的好评，紧紧围绕企业党政工作中心，开拓创新，突出特色，发挥优势，以培养青年人才为重点，广泛开展争当“青年岗位能手”、创建“青年文明号”、青年突击队、青年创新创效等富有成效的活动，团结、引导、带领团员青年坚持改革创新，与时俱进，为改革与发展贡献自己的青春和力量。加强团员青年职工的思想政治教育，注意正面引导，开展多种形式的教育活动，帮助广大团员青年树立崇高理想和坚定的信念，不断提高青工的思想素质，提高了广大青年的责任感和使命感。深化青工岗位能手活动的有效途径，针对企业生产实际，充分利用业余时间，开展“五小”攻关成果，开展“节能降耗”劳动竞赛。不仅促进了岗位能手活动的深入开展，还增强了团组织的吸引力，充分发挥团组织的生力军和突击队作用。贴近青年，为青年健康成长创造良好的空间。

该同志 1998 年进入青岛市机械工业总公司后，一直从事总公司综合统计工作，身处数据统计分析部门，她刻苦钻研业务，带领局属下 20 多个企业，为青岛市行业统计工作作出了重要贡献；在 2003—2006 年公司工会工作期间，伴随着国有企业改革力度的加大，企业内部产业结构、组织结构和队伍结构的大幅度调整，彻底打破了过去大一统的计划经济格局。经济成份、组织形式、就业方式、利益关系和分配方式等都发生了深刻的变化，呈现出经济结构的多元化、劳动关系的复杂化、就业方式的多样化。这给国有企业工会工作带来前所未有的困难与挑战，面对这样的形势，紧紧围绕改革、发展、稳定的大局，全面加强工会组织建设，充分履行工会四项职能，认真推行政务公开、民主监督制度。研究当前工会工作所遇到的新情况、新问题，探索适应新形势要求的企业工会工作新路子。有效激发出职工的工作热情和生产积极性，为社会的繁荣发展兢兢业业做好本职工作。

该同志 2007 年被安排担任公司文书工作，服从组织分配，认真学习专业知识，文书工作者作为机关工作中的参谋、助手，肩负着传达领导意图，为机关各项工作服务的任务。包括制发、处理与管理文件过程中所进行的全部工作，对有价值的文件材料进行收集、管理和提供利用。做好文书立卷工作是连结文书工作与档案工作的纽带。加强文件平时收集和档案提供利用工作，扎扎实实做好新的工作。

胡爽爸爸

胡爽爸爸，胡明，生于1968年3月26日（阴历戊申年二月二十八，属猴）。这里我用第一人称来介绍自己。我还有一个弟弟，胡博，比我小两岁；我的父亲是胡玉珍，生于1940年9月3日（阴历庚辰年八月初二，属龙），家里兄弟三人，排第二，还有一个姐姐。原籍是山东省莱西，退休前担任过青岛市三个中学的副校长；我的母亲是修兰花，生于1941年2月20日（阴历辛巳年正月二十五，属蛇），家中姊妹四个，排第二，还有三个弟弟。退休前是青岛市的小学教师。

我的父母都毕业于山东省莱阳师范学院，那时候属于中专学历，毕业后和其他几位同学共同分配到了青岛市市区的学校工作。可以想象，即便是在今天，两个学生毕业后组成的家庭，经济情况也是很一般的，更不要说是在上世纪六十年代末了。他们俩的工资除了本身的家庭支出外，我的母亲还要给姥姥家寄钱，因为她还有三个弟弟需要结婚娶媳妇，家里盖房子、操办婚事都需要花钱。作为姐弟七个孩子中唯一一个在城市里工作的母亲，则要担负几乎全家的重任。我出生后似乎也特别能吃，但又吃不饱，这样的矛盾造成了我的身体发育不全，一岁多的时候还是又黑又瘦。那年，我姥姥和大舅来青岛看望我的父母，看到我以后心疼的不得了，就说，要不我们抱回农村养几年吧，那时候我母亲又怀了我弟弟，正发愁我的养育问题，便痛快地答应了，也算给他们小两口减了一个大负担。

于是我便随着姥姥回了莱阳农村老家，就是沐浴店镇上蒲格庄。那里的生活很苦，没有电、没有沥青路、没有饼干，但有青山、有绿水、有小伙伴，还有三个舅舅陪我玩。我在农村一直生活到六岁半才被送回青岛，在那几年里吃的东西都是农村特有的，地瓜、地瓜干、地瓜叶、玉米面窝头、黑面窝头、豆面是最常见的，馒头几乎常年看不到，更不要说白面馒头了，我印象里只有过年或遇到婚庆时才有一点。可这丝毫不影响我的成长，至少我的体格比在青岛时健壮了，还认识了一群农村小伙伴，只是现在都没有联系了，唯一存着的是一张和一个叫“广浩”的邻居小男孩合影照片，照片里的我是不是又白又壮？不知广浩在哪，希望现在他过得好。



我的三个舅平时除了干农活，空余时间就是陪我一起玩。我大舅比我大两旬，即 24 岁，我三舅比我大一句，即 12 岁，二舅的年龄介于他们俩之间。三舅的年龄和我差的小，所以在家里干的农活不多，带我玩的时间最多，用猎枪打野兔子、用弹弓打知了、掏鸟窝、抓蝙蝠、抓蚂蚱、抓蝈蝈、抓豆虫、抓金壳郎……，几乎农村孩子的娱乐项目都带我体验过。在农村够吃的粮食少，抓到的东西大多数是带回家吃的，也算额外的点心，比如知了、蚂蚱等等，都可以吃。在那个年代吃这些东西是个乐趣，如今的我已经不愿意再吃了。

大舅是在我快回城市时结婚的，应该是快 30 岁了。姥姥给张罗着办了婚礼，婚礼很热闹，村里的邻居，大人小孩都来看新媳妇，也为了分点婚礼食品吃。我印象最深的是白面馒头，平时没有机会吃，在婚礼上却可以品尝一下。馒头很大，头一天蒸好了，第二天等婚礼时，用刀将馒头切成两三厘米长的方块，放在盘子里给来的客人当点心吃。那时候我还小，不能上桌吃饭，要知道，在重要场合的酒宴，女人和孩子都不能上桌吃饭，只能在锅台旁做饭、炒菜，忙活完了后才能在锅台旁边吃点东西。其实这些所谓的规矩不是因为对客人的尊重，说到底还是因为穷，没有足够的酒菜供全家人吃，只能让客人先吃，自己家的女人和孩子只能吃剩菜、剩饭。

二舅和三舅的婚礼我就没有机会参加了，三舅因为从小机灵，早早学了开拖拉机，在村里很受欢迎，无论是拉货还是给村里干大活都得三舅去，反而在二舅之前结了婚，媳妇也很贤惠。二舅为人比较老实，有点儿木讷，一直找不到媳妇，多年后草草娶了一个媳妇。人长得还算周正，就是小时候开始就有点呆傻，见人总是嘿嘿的笑，不过很能干活，也为二舅生了一个儿子和女儿，当然孩子都是正常的。不过那个儿子太调皮，20 多岁的时候吃了变质的香蕉，中毒而亡。二舅也因此闷闷不乐，一次外出时不留神被车撞了，车跑了，他的一条腿从此瘸了。

我的母亲，最喜欢二舅这个弟弟，因为他从小就看起来不太机灵，不像大舅和三舅，一个干木匠、一个开拖拉机，生计都不成问题。所以我母亲也经常接济一下二舅，母亲去世之后，每到过年的时候，我都会寄点吃的东西给二舅，并打电话交流一下。他的女儿和女婿都不错，日常期间都会照顾二舅和二舅母。我和大舅、三舅如今没有联系了，大舅的儿子大学毕业后在北京当了一个干部，买了房子，接大舅和大舅母去住了；三舅的

一家搬到莱阳市里去住了，只有二舅还住在农村老宅子里。

我是六岁半时回了青岛，在北仲家洼第一小学的幼儿园待了半年才上小学，我的母亲也在这个学校当老师。刚回青岛的家时，我并不认为这是我的家，因为这个家有个人认为这是他的家，这个人就是我弟弟胡博。想想也对，他没出生时我离开了家，他长到了5岁半，应该有很多记忆了，忽然冒出一个土里土气的人自称是他哥哥，还要拿他的玩具玩，一时间很难接受。可我不一样，我离开青岛的时候虽然没有印象，但我在姥姥家，他们会时不时的提醒我这个“外甥狗”，我的家在青岛，迟早是要回去的。如今我光明正大的回到了青岛的家，居然还有人有意意见，是不是很奇怪？



好在家里也没什么玩具，父母也是尽力撮合着我们俩，小孩嘛，很快就玩到一起了。爸爸给我们的东西从此也是每人一个，我记得他找人用学校的椅子靠背，做了两把砍鬼子的大刀，当然是木头的，一人一把，我的是原木白的颜色，弟弟的是褐色木纹的。还做了两个小板凳，也是一人一个。有了这些“公平”的待遇，我们兄弟俩的关系也越来越融洽了。不过胡博还是会时不时的告我一状，比如我背地里打他了、我又摔碎碗啦、偷他零花钱啦，等等，以此显示他离父母的关系比我更近一些。

我的小学分别在北仲家洼第一小学、太平镇小学上过，作为同一个年级的另外一个班的班主任，我的母亲显然还是非常关心我的。我上课的时候小动作特别多，不专心听课。有一次班主任在写黑板字的时候，因为是背朝着我们，我就用手比划成一把手枪的形状，对着老师假装瞄准，还瞄了好几次，这个举动被同学看见了，都窃窃地笑，后来下课后报告了老师。

因为我的母亲是另一个班的班主任，所以老师就批评了我，然后把这件事告诉了我的母亲。按理说，这样的事是自己的孩子做的不对，批评了我两句也就可以了。但我的母亲不是这么做的，她说，孩子嘛，瞄老师几下又不会真的开枪，下次不要这样就可以，没有必要大惊小怪，于是一急之下把我调到了他们的班里上课了。后来，我的班主任去找学校的校长，校长也不置可否，只能从中调和，这才又把我从我母亲的班里面调了回去。

从这件事可以看出，母亲还是比较溺爱孩子的。还有一次事情，在小学三年级时，大约是1978年，当时生活即便在城市里也普遍比较拮据，我曾和其他三四个同学一起放学后在市场上小偷小摸，被发现后告到了学校，老师接到举报后又通知了家长，而我的父母那时是中小学教师，本以为放学回家后我会遭受严厉的惩罚，但母亲袒护我，估计也劝说了父亲，所以当晚只是口头批了我一顿，没有进行‘严刑拷打’。这种‘宽松’的处理方式大大超出了我对偷窃和偷窃后必会受到惩罚和毒打的心理预期，因为那时候家长打骂犯错的孩子是非常普遍的一种教育方式。也正是这样的方式让我产生了侥幸心理，为日后的一系列缺乏边界感的错误行为埋下了祸根。

如今，我的父亲当然不会再给我补上这顿教训了，也算是终生遗憾了吧。我常常想，父母结合到一起的时候肯定也不懂应该如何教育孩子，我如今是明白这个常识的，所以他们对我的教育相对于同龄人来讲我认为还是比较成功的，但那次的管教的疏松的确是他们教育的重大失误，父亲当时应该抵挡住母亲的劝说，狠狠的打我一顿，让我长长记性，知道哪些该做，哪些坚决不能做，让我今后的生活走正确的路。

为了这件事儿，我母亲觉得面子上过不去，于是就给我转了学校，连同她也一起转到了另外一个学校，就是青岛市太平镇小学。如今，这个学校已经随着一九九几年的棚户区改造被拆除撤销了，但那件事是我终生难忘的。我在那个学校又上了两年课，然后在那里小学毕业，学校的老师对我也都很好，我总算是慢慢地长大了一些，以比较好的成绩考入了青岛市三十八中学，在那里完成了初一。

虽说我们的父母都是教师职业，但我和弟弟都没有就业后当老师的想法。我从小理想便是去部队当兵，这一定是我从小处于当时的文革时期，满眼看到的听到的都是人民解放军如何如何英勇杀敌、保家卫国的动人事迹，还有雷锋、张思德、黄继光、董存瑞等英雄人物不断激励着我幼小的

心灵。本来一切进行的都挺顺利，无奈上初二后，因为周末去海泊河公园的旱冰场溜冰时不幸感染了结膜炎，又加上海慈医院的庸医误诊，很快恶化成了角膜炎，休学了一个学期，无法到校上课了。因为有一段时间几乎每天都要去市北区医院的眼科给左眼换药，换药后不能见光，需要用纱布捂住，几个月下来，左眼的角膜炎倒是治好了，视力 1.2 左右，可右眼却由于疲劳过度，活生生累近视了。就这样，我在极度的无奈和叹息中留了一级，为了心理上好受一点，我的父亲给我转了学校，转到他任职的青岛二十三中学，在这里读了两年初中。



父亲是这个学校的副校长，在他的严加管教和学校老师的善意帮助下，我的学习成绩从班级里的二十几名一路走到了级部前列，毕业考试成绩是全校级部第一名，也算是给父亲争了光。之所以说在上学的过程中得到了学校老师的善意帮助，是因为，我父亲本人对工作比较认真，但对同事还是比较友善的，所以加上我的学习基础还不差，故而把对我父亲的友善在我的身上加倍体现了出来，我学习成绩的飞升，当上班级里的学生干部，都与此不无关系。

在这样的背景下，如果我选择留在学校继续上职业高中，然后在满足年龄的要求之后去参军也是勉强可以的。但我的视力又有些影响，正在犹豫不定的时候，我父亲看出了我的纠结，便在一天午饭后把我叫到了学校后面的嘉定山上，和我推心置腹地谈了半个多小时。他说，你如果想在二十三中继续上课，根本就不需要考试。但你应该着眼于未来，我和你母亲都是中专毕业，我们非常希望你能够继续上普通高中，争取能考上大学，这样也算是为你以后的工作打下一个比较好的基础。毕竟，我们国家现在

刚刚开始改革开放，以后会需要更多有知识有文化的人参与到工作当中。爸爸的这番谈话让我很触动，也就是在那时候下定了决心，准备考普通高中。

当时我们的家已经从仲家洼搬到了鞍山四路，在那里有一套简单的三室公寓。在他周围隔着最近的学校是青岛市第十六中学，还有两个学校十七中和十九中。当时按我的成绩，我觉得十九中有一些难度，十六或十七中倒是可以考虑，于是我选择报考了离家最近的青岛十六中。也如愿以偿，我考上了那个学校，当时在班级里边的成绩是十几名。或许是有点儿骄傲自满的缘故，上高中后我担任班长还兼任体育委员，忽然喜欢上了打篮球，每天下午都会和同学们打很长时间，学习也有所松懈。高一这一年两个学期下来，我的学习排名分别下降到 21 名和 38 名。但可喜的是，自己被评为青岛市优秀学生干部荣誉称号，算是得到一丝安慰。



（图中依次为：胡明、父亲胡玉珍、母亲修兰花、弟弟胡博，
1986 年左右）

在高一结束后的暑假假期，自己也忽然意识到了参加高考的紧迫性，想起了父亲当初让我报考普通高中的目的。于是，我拿出了初中努力学习的那股劲儿，在假期把高一的课程知识重新整理了一遍，又适当预习了高

二的部分课程，因为学校为了迎接高考，一般会在高二结束后将大部分课程结束，以便在高三全力以赴准备高考复习。应该说自己高二的学习还是见效的，班级排名也在逐渐上升，高考前的模拟考试，我的成绩不算高，但也属于有希望被录取的那一批学生。我不属于那种特别聪明的学生，成绩属于中等，发挥好的话属于中等偏上的水平。

在高考志愿的填写表里，我的第一和第二志愿分别选择了长沙铁道学院、青岛化工学院等，但我母亲得知后担心我在长沙离家太远，不舍得，硬是给我删掉了。多年后我才想明白，父、母都是从农村来到青岛的，饱尝远离父母的苦楚，因此让我留在青岛读书也是可以理解的。

最后我以 **496** 分的高考成绩，加上全市优秀学生干部的荣誉称号可以有的 **20** 分加分，总分 **516** 分，被青岛化工学院录取，读化工设备与机械专业。

去报道时，床还没铺好，我们系的辅导员就来找我，当班长还是当书记让我挑一个，我说班长吧，他说好，随手给我一本小册子，书名我记不清了，但大体是类似大学女生心理学的书。然后他说，在大学做班长尤其要注意女生的心理，好好看看吧。看来他是有备而来的。

这个学校于 **2002** 年更名为青岛科技大学。但是已经和我没有太大关系了，我心目当中的母校是青岛化工学院，而不是现在这个青岛科技大学。毕业之后，因为我和其他几个同学住在青岛的缘故，所以我们在毕业十五周年，二十、二十五周年分别举办了同学校友会，把我们这个系八七级的学生同学都召集来，在青岛见面、聚餐，共叙离别之情。到了 **2021** 年，本来说好的毕业三十年的聚会没有办成，一是没人敢组织，二是也没人敢来，估计今后很难再组织这样的同学聚会了。



一个人在没退休前，心里或多或少地还有那么一丝野心，希望做这个事、那个事，到退休前后时，一个人的心智已经非常成熟了，自己能做什么，不能做什么，都一清二楚，也不想再去讨好谁了，因此对这样的聚会也就慢慢失去了兴趣。比如我，目前正式退居二线的时间点，这两年一直在不断地反思自己。除了反思，还会复盘年轻时做的一些举动，如果换做今天的我是不是还会那样做，等等。不知其他人是否和我一样。

说到这里，我想说说自己的信仰与工作。

从自己的职业和工作角度而言，我作为一个共产党员，这应该就是我的信仰了，至少党章里是这么规定的。在中国，你加入了这个政党，就要为之奋斗终身，不能掺杂一点含糊其辞的因素。我在大学里当学生干部时就已经是一名党员了，那时自己经常被这个政党的宏大叙事风格所激励，以为这就是我的信仰了，但这种信仰解决不了我对人生追求过程中的一系列问题，比如恋爱、婚姻、工作的目的和意义等等。随着时间的推移，我在思考，作为一个人来讲，共产党员不是我的个人层面的信仰，因为我不可能一天 24 小时地为工作而生活，我必须有自己的空间和时间去思考我作为一个地球的物种，应该如何有尊严的活着，即便身陷囹圄也没有理由限制我的思想自由。

小时候，我时不时地会思考我是从哪里来的，但又解释不清楚。直到大学毕业之后，在青岛化工厂（后来改名为青岛海晶化工厂）里的闲散工

作状态又不断刺激着我去思考，人从哪里来？又往哪里去？那时厂门口的门卫和我比较熟悉，后来去他家吃饭时得知她妈妈信基督教，于是也带着我去她妈妈所在的一个家庭教会聚会，然而没有接触到可以近距离沟通的人，去了两次后就不了了之了。那时候自己的认知比较狭隘，认为指引自己努力去工作就应该是生活的全部，工作就是生活中第一位的事情，没有高品质的工作哪有高品质的生活呢？然后，假如自己的工作没有那么宏伟，没有那么有意义呢？生活岂不是更要一塌糊涂？那时我在厂里的一个车间里做设备维护和保养工作，工作量非常小，工作中 80% 的时间处于闲散状态，久而久之便让我的生活也陷在迷茫当中，既找不到工作的出路，也过不好自己的生活。

到了 1996 年，厂里的氯丁橡胶销路受日本进口橡胶的影响开始走下坡路，厂里自己生产的橡胶杂质多、价格高，厂里的生产线只能开开停停，到 1997 年前后干脆几个月不开生产线。在这一段时间里，我大多在家照顾胡爽，反正厂里也没有什么事情要做，干脆在家研究起来电脑。虽说我大学里学的是设备和机械方面的知识，但骨子里对电脑还是非常痴迷的。那时候辽宁路的电子信息城有很多小公司在卖组装电脑以及软件，市场非常火爆。我便在家攒了一台电脑，学习电脑使用和维护方面的知识，并安装了 AutoCAD 绘图软件，再买一本介绍 AutoCAD V10 软件是如何绘图的书。于是，一边在家照顾胡爽，一边学习如何使用电脑绘图，因为自己本身就是学机械专业，又加上对电脑的热爱，因此很快就掌握了熟练使用电脑绘制机械图纸的方法。



事情往往就是这样的，当你感觉到这条路走不通的时候儿，在另一个世界却打开了一扇门。我会 **AutoCAD** 画图的事情很快被设计室的领导知道了，于是他请求厂里的总工把我从车间调到了设计室。设计室是一个负责全厂工艺设备等设计的地方，里面有很多个专业，如机械、土木、建筑、电气、给排水等等。但是他们的设计画图都是采用传统的方式，就是设计人员在画好了白纸的图纸之后，由描图人员把图纸描在描图纸上，是一种半透明的纸，然后经过晒图才成为最终的蓝图。

我到了设计室之后，在设计室张主任的倡导下，慢慢的教会了这几个组的专业设计人员，开始逐渐摆脱手工画图，转而使用 **AutoCAD** 来画图。最大的便捷之处就是，画完了图之后，可以直接将图纸打印在晒图纸上，而且可以反复修改图纸。这样就大大地提高了设计的效率，也减轻了、甚至是去掉了描图人员的工作。同时，设计室可以再购买专业的电子化大型组合设计方案，并且可以对方案中的图纸进行二次电脑修改，这些举措都大大提升了设计室的整体设计水平，让厂设计室升级到了一个新高度。

设计室的张主任和厂领导都非常的满意，因为这一系列举措，为厂里面的 6 万吨离子膜烧碱项目做出了重要的工作推进，为此我被提拔为设计室的见习副主任。这一年非常的辛苦，得到这样的回报，心里面也特别的踏实。之所以这么说，是因为在这一年的工作里，自己和设计室的主任和其他同事共同努力，起早贪黑的工作，的确做了很多的努力。化工厂是早晨 7:30 上班，但我一般 6:30 就到了办公室，下午 16:30 下班，但我经

常要加班，加上和主任、师弟吃饭喝酒，回家就得 11 点多。几乎每天回家、离开家都见不到孩子，也几乎无法和妻子有效交流。所以工作的成绩是与团队辛勤的工作分不开的。在新的工作单位里，我主要从事的是计算机相关的工作，还有数据库。虽然与以前的工厂有很大的差别，但自己在这里似乎看到了自己的价值，工作也更加的努力、努力、专心。但对我来说，工作毕竟是工作，我仍然没有找到生活的方向和信仰的归属。于是我在设计室工作一年多之后，在家里人的帮助下，应聘去了一个香港独资的公司，属于电信行业。在这个工作了八年之久的单位，属实有很多感情和牵挂，但生活的压力和内心的追求，不得不让我暂时放弃这里的工作。

抛去三个月的实习期，我是在 1998 年 11 月正式进入青岛联通公司的。在新的环境里，我从事的是计算机相关的工作，比如营业电脑维护和数据库管理。虽然与以前的工厂有很大的差别，但自己在这里似乎看到了自己的价值，工作也更加的努力、专心。在随后的两年多时间里，除了电脑维护方面外，自己还兼作公司的增值业务方面的工作，并于 2001 年在公司部门副经理竞聘中获得成功，转而从事市场部工作，2007 年提拔为 CDMA 业务部经理，并在自己的职业生涯中从事过其他多个部门和区县公司经理的工作。随着工作难度的增加，自己的业务能力也在提高，但对家庭的关心却减少了很多，生活重心更倾向于工作以及工作相关的圈子，减少了对家庭和孩子的照顾，夫妻关系也在疏远，自己一度迷失了人生的方向，像一个工具人一样在社会上漂浮。

在 2003 年，一次交友不慎，险些对家庭造成影响。在我向家人坦诚之后，妻子和家中长辈都原谅了我的错误，并积极寻求当时我母亲所在教会的牧师帮助。牧师并没有像处理社会事物那样采取协调所谓的社会关系，而是引导我反思自己的错误，并在神面前悔改祷告，求神帮助，仰望交托给祂处理，而不是自己独自承担一切，并教会我该在处理这件事的过程中，也应全身心的交托，依靠神的带领走出困境。

这样的处理方式和交托的祷告很快就安抚了我焦躁的内心，也安慰了妻子和家人，并一步步地走出了困境，生活又恢复成原来的平静。通过这件事，我认清了工作关系和连带的社会关系，它们只是我生活的一部分，自己生活中最重要的始终是家人。自此以后，妻子和我跟随母亲进入了教会参加礼拜，并分别于 4 月 15 日和 5 月 26 日信了主。如前所述，妻子

和我热心地为教会服事，并在当年下半年买到了一处稍大一些的房子，兼作教会的聚会点，并持续了八年时间。在这段时间里，自己在工作和社会交往中，心里多了一条红线，那就是圣经的教导。虽然自己面对的环境错综复杂且充满了各样的险恶和诱惑，自己也时常陷入其中，但心里的红线时常在提醒自己，哪些事情该做，哪些事情该避开。如果用一句话总结这段时间的感悟，那就是，有圣经真理做准绳，知道哪些事情不该做，自己能避开 80%，仍有一小部分错谬的事情避不开或没有避开。

最终，因为那家教会牧师之间内部出现分裂，我们不想掺入其中的矛盾，也没有选边站，无奈离开了。在社会的三自教会游荡了近两年后，我们经人介绍进入了 3G 仰望教会，并逐渐发扬热心为教会服事。这时候的我们已经可以每年读一到两遍圣经了，并且在 2017 年重新将我们的家奉献出来，用于新组建的查经小组“耶稣生命成长小组”使用；一年后的 7 月 8 日响应教会号召组建了教会的分堂“生命树堂”。为了让新堂里的十多个弟兄姐妹有一个宽敞的聚会场合，我们擅自做了一个决定，在当时的租赁的房子还差三个月到期的情况下，又租了一处更大、也更贵的房子，海悦中心作为聚会场所。



之所以说是“擅自作主”是这样的，我们在之前的教会奉献出自己的家作为聚会场所，是因为那个教会的经济条件很一般，无法以教会的名义去买房，正巧我们家要买房，是刚需，所以我们买了之后只需要将客厅、餐

厅、洗手间等贡献出来用于聚会即可。而当时我们家的情况已经发生了变化，当时为了筹措胡爽的留学费用，我们借着 2016 年房地产的高峰期，买卖了一套房子，并在入住一年多之后便在价格高位卖出了。那时正是 2016 年下半年，我们紧接着买了另一套房子，位于崂山区，但不巧的是因为拆迁问题耽搁了四年之久方才交付，可我们当时正在处理胡爽妈妈生病的问题，便也迟迟没有入住，因此在那六年多时间我们俩都是在租房生活。既然是租房生活，当时孩子的姥爷已经不和我们一起生活了，只有我们两个人一起住，似乎没有必要住那么大的一个套三房子了。这就相对于是我们俩为教会出钱租了聚会场地，按理说应该和其他弟兄姐妹们商量好之后再决定是否租赁更大的房子。可我们俩仍然是过去的思维方式，甘愿主动为教会承担费用，岂不知也无形中给我们俩的生活带来了些许负担。

生命树堂在海悦中心聚会了几个月后，胡爽妈妈听说在我们堂之后成立的华冠堂的姐妹们缺一个固定的聚会场所，便主动提出来让华冠堂来海悦中心聚会，这样生命树堂在周日上午聚会，华冠堂则在周日下午聚会，并行了一年多之后，于 2020 年 2 月生命树堂与华冠堂合并成立“应许堂”。



在此之前的 2019 年 2 月，胡爽妈妈的身体出现状况，被诊断为“再生障碍性贫血”“血小板减少症”，经历了四年的病痛折磨，于 2022 年 12 月 15 日去世。在她生病期间，应许堂的弟兄姐妹们时常给予物质和精神方面的鼓励和帮助，3G 仰望教会更是组织了全体信徒的爱心募捐活动，

给我们家十二万多元的帮助，用于胡爽妈妈的治疗，非常感恩。东平在住院的四年里没有参加聚会，而我则继续在应许堂服事，参加聚会，但我会每次聚会后回家和东平交流聚会的内容和感受，并一同探讨。也幸亏是有了基督信仰，我们在疾病治疗过程中才会更加深切体会生活和信仰的关系。刚开始我们的祷告是寻求神的医治和康复，后来我们的祷告则是寻求神的带领，按照祂预备的环境去做，不再幻想其他的事情，心平气和地按照祂指引的路去做好眼前的治疗。如果再用一句话总结这段时间的感悟，那就是，不再被任何理论思想辖制，认真按祂的带领做事，知道哪些事情不该做，连求都不应该去求，安心顺服下来。

2024年3月底，应许堂和其他分堂联合的复活节活动，我没有参加，也再没有参加堂里的聚会和敬拜。说实话，虽说堂里几乎都是姊妹在聚会，但我和她们都保持着友善的关系，没有和她们中的任何一个人有过冲突，也没有不可调和的矛盾。都没有，但唯独忽然失去了再去分享的冲动。自己心里一个强烈的感觉是，我觉得自己该“退修”了，退出、独自灵修一段时间，让自己的身心灵都调整一下。

读到这里，读者也会感觉到一点，那就是胡爽妈妈和我在为教会做事时，出于个人意见的时候多于和教会其他人共同协商的时候。也就是说，我们做的事情往往带有比较重的个人色彩，而不是和教会其他人共同祷告得来的结果。这就是近年来我醒悟到的，胡爽妈妈和我存在一个共同的问题，为教会所做的服事过多，不注重个人灵修和祷告，也忽略了跟随神脚步回归本身生活的实际。现在想这个问题，原因不在教会本身，而在于身处教会的每一个人是不是养成了顺服神的带领的生活习惯，而不是出于众肢体物质需求的带领。这个问题，可以这么说或许更明确：胡爽妈妈和我以前为教会的服事是没有问题的，也符合教会的需求，问题在我们俩本身，误以为服事可以代替神对每个人的带领，从而在一定程度上压制或消灭了来自于我们自身的圣灵感动。从另一个角度说，我们的热心服事也在某种程度上压制了别人应有的圣灵感动。

那些看起来理论正确的服事实际上是在剥夺圣灵在其他人身上的带领。因此，离开应许堂不是撒但的搅扰，是神在告诉我，孩子，你该静下心来听听我对你说的话了，更应该在独处的时候，反思自己信主这些年的行为，悔改那些有悖于圣经真理的事情了。我听从了圣灵的声音，在日复

一日的思考中，反思自己的行为，在 husir.org 的博客空间里一笔一画的写下了自己省察的点点滴滴，安心的听从神的带领，潜心与主同行。两年下来，自己的身心灵都有所好转，不仅自己从省察中反思了自己，还让自己的文章成为他人的祝福和劝勉。

胡爽的爷爷奶奶

记忆中的父母

胡爽爸爸的父母分别来自山东省的莱西和莱阳，现在都是地级市，以前都是山东省烟台市的县，莱西于1983年10月划入青岛市。他们俩当初的家境都是比较清贫的，以务农为本，家里的子女大多数没有上过学。爸爸的父亲胡玉珍1940年9月3日出生在莱西日庄镇胡家都村，在家里的弟兄里面排行老三，上面还有大哥、二哥，三个弟兄还有一个姐姐。爸爸父亲的二哥是在莱西当地上的小学，后来做了那个学校的校长；大哥虽然没上过学，当过兵，身高1米8多，非常魁梧，是在中国的解放战争中攻打过莱阳县城的功臣，据说因为经常夜行军的缘故，直到复员后走夜路都不用灯照路，便可如白天走路一般。爸爸父亲是家里孩子中学习比较好的，但因为家里农活需要人，小学毕业后便辍学了一年才上初中，成绩优异，毕业后被保送进入了莱阳师范学校。



胡爽爸爸的妈妈叫修兰花，1941年2月20日出生在莱阳沐浴店上蒲格庄村，在家里的七个弟兄姐妹中排行第三，原本家里轮不到她去上学，

但因为她上面的两个姐姐不愿意上学，才轮到她去，没想到她学习成绩很好，以村里第一名的成绩考上了莱阳师范学校，与同在那个学校的胡玉珍相识了，毕业后他们俩和其他几个人一起分配工作到了青岛。要知道在中国的那个年代，学生毕业后的工作分配都是学校决定的，个人没有选择的权利，而且在莱阳师范学校毕业的学生如果能够分配到像青岛、烟台这样的‘大城市’工作也是件非常让人高兴的事，虽说不上是‘光宗耀祖’但在村里却非常值得家族的人庆贺一番。

至于他们两人是如何从相知到相恋的故事，他们俩一直没和我们说，可能是害羞吧。这样的情形在中国很常见，家里人对婚恋等相关的事情一般都是遮遮掩掩，只可意会不可言传。由此呢，他们俩不主动和我们讲述他们的事，我和弟弟也羞于主动问他们。我猜呢，首先是命运的安排，再就是两人性格互补，符合恋人间‘相互制约’的原则，又加上都是从贫困农村来到大城市工作，也就是做人民教师，算是从社会底层打拼，在同甘共苦的经历中彼此找到了依靠，因此后来的结婚也就顺理成章了。他们结婚时大约在 1967 年，住在当时青岛市的台东区的西仲家洼 402 号院子里，这里在中国解放后到九十年代初可以说是青岛市市区的贫民区之一，大约位于今天的延安三路以东、延吉路以南、金坛路以西、宁夏路以北组成的方块区域里，因为地势非常低，从远处看像是一片洼地，又加上最初的原住民是从云南地区迁来，且仲姓的人居多，故名‘仲家洼’，按方向来说，分东仲、西仲、南仲和北仲四个部分。我和弟弟胡博都出生在这里，家是住在西仲家洼，上学是在北仲家洼。直到 1980 年，我的父亲才从学校分配到了他人生中，也是我们这个家里的第一套房子，位于仲家洼以北不到 3 公里远的一处楼房。从这个五楼新家里的阳台便可看见仲家洼，如果是早晨，仲家洼明显就是一片洼地，上方常有一片薄雾，名副其实。

胡爽的爸爸，也就是我刚出生时，正处于中国的文化大革命初期，全国人们的生活普遍比较困难，加上我的父母不会照顾孩子，因此一岁多的我骨瘦如柴，我的姥姥从农村来城里看望我时心疼不已，又加上我的妈妈正在怀着我的弟弟，也没有精力照顾我了，便由我姥姥把我带回了莱阳农村抚养。

姥姥家在莱阳县沐浴店镇的上蒲哥庄村，离仲家洼大约 150 公里，那时候的车速度慢，坐长途车大约需要五到六个小时，还要步行一段时间才

能到。我回去时大姨和二姨和四姨都出嫁在其他村子住，家里的三个舅舅没结婚在家住。他们三个都非常喜欢我，最大的大舅比我大两句，也就是24岁，最小的是三舅，他比我大一句，也就是12岁。三人干农活的闲暇时间便是协助姥姥喂养我，稍大一点后便带着我一起玩耍，到山上捉各种昆虫、打野兔子、水库里摸鱼……，同时也认识了很多农村的小伙伴。

在农村虽然吃的很一般，但身体却越来越硬朗结实了。那时候平时吃的最多的是地瓜干和玉米饼子，黑面馒头、豆面面条、蒸地瓜叶等等，只有逢年过节才会吃到水饺和白面馒头。记得我大舅结婚的时候，我已经快6岁了，结婚前一天蒸的大馒头凉下来以后切成3厘米见方的馒头块，在结婚当天当成了点心发给前来参加婚礼的乡亲们吃。

我是6岁半的时候，也就是临近上学前送回青岛的，那时候弟弟已经4岁多了，彼此见面是仍然在仲家洼的家里，面对突然见面的‘弟弟’和‘哥哥’，我们俩平时没少发生冲突，我依仗年龄大欺负弟弟，弟弟仗着这个家是‘他自己的’频频向父母告状，让我这个‘凭空而降’的哥哥没少挨了父母训斥。

我没有见过我姥爷，好像据我妈后来说，她上师范学校那时候姥爷因为患‘急性肠绞杀’去世的，发病时很突然，加上农村没有合适的医疗条件，38岁的年纪便活活疼死了。七个孩子的家便由我姥姥一个人扛了下来，姥姥一直没有再嫁，独立管着这个家，把女儿们一个个嫁出去，又为舅舅们挨个找了媳妇并盖了新房，自己还不断的干农活、纺线、织布、做衣服……。我姥姥姓徐，名桂花，属狗，据我推算是1922年生人，享年86岁，据说娘家还算不错，算是小家碧玉吧。姥姥是从小缠足的，我见过，但她为人谦和，说话不急不躁，一点没有小脚女人的那些以讹传讹的缺点，把一家人的家务打理的有条不紊。

我一直觉得亏欠姥姥，除了她老人家的养育之恩外，还欠她一个收音机。我在上初中时喜欢上了无线电知识，热衷于制作矿石收音机和半导体收音机，经常去电子商店买各种零部件回家组装，当时姥姥来青岛在家里住，我就对她说等我组装一个收音机给姥姥。可几十年过去了，这个愿望一直未能实现。我曾在后来很多年后和她说起过，她悠悠的说，给我收音机我也听不懂他们说啥啊，呵呵，她似乎对我当年的承诺忘却了似的。

姥姥会时不时的来青岛住上十天半月，因为她的女儿修兰花在她的几

个孩子也算条件不错的了，到青岛也相当于度假了。但实际上大家过得都不算富裕，我父母每个人的工资加起来也就是不足人民币 80 元，仅限于维持日常生计而已。除去一家人的日常开支，我妈总能攒下一点钱寄给我姥姥补贴家用，要知道舅舅们结婚娶妻、盖新房都是需要钱的。从这方面说，我妈也算是姥姥的得力帮手了。

我和弟弟长大后不再打闹了，还算友好，我们都喜欢隔个 2、3 年来家里的姥姥，她会缝补衣服、还会剪纸的手艺，因为不识字，小脚不便走路和出去串门，大多时间是在我家里帮着我妈干家务活，做饭等等。有时候也会在我们的追问下讲述一些过去村里的事，对我们用的电话、手机和电脑等新鲜用品都感到很新奇，但也从未表现出想尝试一下的样子。对谁都是温文尔雅，不说话的时候便默默地坐在那里听我们说话聊天，偶尔微笑一下，表示她也在认真听。因为共同的话题不多，我和姥姥会表现出和我弟弟不一样的举动，那就是我会拉着姥姥的手，她也会拿出另一只手抚摸我的手，一遍一遍地似乎千言万语都在这抚摸的动作中了。姥姥的手很瘦，但手掌和皮肤很光滑，摸着很有安全感。

姥姥这一生的衣服都是自己亲手做的，我的姨、舅舅们小时候的衣服都是她亲自做的，孩子们长大后开始穿对襟衣服中间系扣的衣服了，但她一直都是老式农村妇女的大襟衣服，裤子、鞋也是。从摘棉花开始，弹棉花、纺线、织布等等步骤，最后裁剪成型，我记得她小时候纺线的样子，久久不能忘记。我妈后来也打算给姥姥买比较现代的衣服样式，但姥姥仍然习惯旧时的大襟袄，只能作罢。

相比之下，我爸爸往家寄钱的机会似乎不多，因为据我爸爸说，我的爷爷、奶奶早就去世了，我都没有机会见到二位老人，只在我爸爸的相册里见过一张我奶奶泛黄的 1 寸照片，现在我已记不得奶奶的模样了，只记得她穿的是一件深色大襟棉衣。我爸爸和妈妈冲突最多的地方是爸爸家里的亲戚来青岛家里面住，按我妈的说法，爸爸家的亲戚似乎是排着队一波一波的来家里吃住，妈妈要不停的做饭菜供他们吃饭喝酒。现在想想，这大多是物质条件不足引发的矛盾，假如条件好一些，可以让客人住宾馆、到饭店吃饭的话，根本不必为这些事发愁。另一个原因是生活、卫生习惯差异很大导致彼此间的矛盾，缺少共同语言。

父母的信仰

我从小到大的感觉就是，我父母对各种宗教都没有涉足，直到我结婚后，确切地说是父亲生病之后，我母亲开始了基督教的信仰，此前家里没有任何宗教的痕迹。在中国，一般到了逢年过节前夕，家人都会到户外的十字路口去给逝去的亲人烧纸，我父母从来没烧过。很多中国人信佛，家里会在房间的某个地方设立佛龕，我家从来没有。我和弟弟似乎也从不和我们的父母讨论关于信仰或宗教方面的事情，家里平时说话交流的主要是围绕我们俩的学校里的事情。如果说又那么一点关于信仰的，那可能就是战争电影、电视剧里的英雄人物秉承的，为共产主义奋斗不息的话题了。再一个方面，可能就是父亲就是一名共产党员，在单位里也会依照党员干部的标准规范自己的言谈举止，在外人看来是那种不苟言笑的人，实际上是个很随和的人，因此他会鼓励我们兄弟俩积极入党，不过也不是苦口婆心的那种，就是一种愿望，似乎入党、考大学就是对我们俩的期望了。

父亲生病后，母亲似乎刚刚退休，因此照顾父亲的重担就落在了她身上，那时候我弟弟胡博刚大学毕业参加工作，在外跑销售，也替我父亲在外地到处打听治疗的偏方，并买药回来。我那时也刚刚参加工作，很适应厂里的松散管理，整天想着和厂里的朋友们玩，心思完全不在家里。又加上刚结婚，不和父母住在一起了，因此对父亲的病情了解的并不多。但那时候的母亲已经信了基督教，会按时参加周日的聚会，读圣经，为父亲的病祷告。有一次我去医院探视，正碰到父亲全身疼痛，我母亲则在旁边带着父亲学着做认罪祷告，我母亲说一句，我父亲跟着说一句，忍着病痛，祈求耶稣基督的饶恕和赦免。这是我第一次对基督教有所了解。

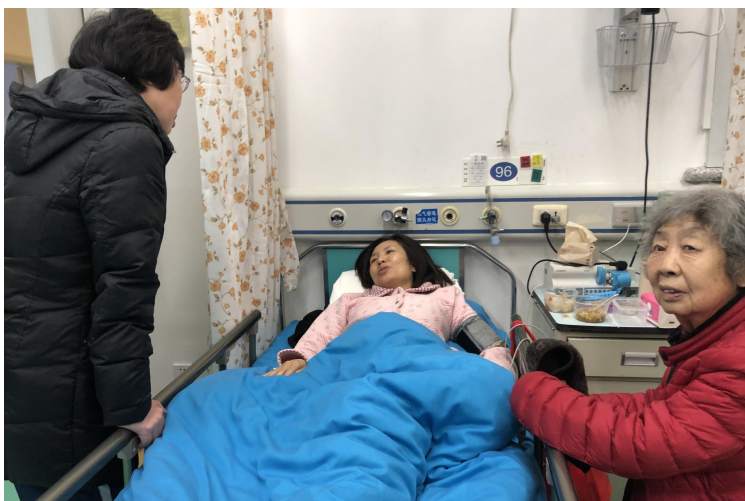
二十多年以后，我在经历了几乎同样的病痛场景后方才醒悟，当年的父母经历着什么样的痛苦和无助。在这片土地上，体制内的人员大多只有共产党这一名义上的“信仰”可以公开谈论，其他的佛教、道教几乎都无法登上大雅之堂，人们遇到难以克服的困难时只能在孤立无援中等待。就连我父亲这样一个共产党员，在病痛中也只有耶稣可以成为呼求的对象。父母相伴一起来到青岛，共同生活了近四十年，在父亲生命的最后时刻，仍然是母亲给父亲带去了福音，虽然父亲的病痛没有减轻多少，但心灵得到了安慰。父亲走的时候非常安详，就如同睡着了一般。

母亲还是很坚强的，她没有把父亲治病借钱的数目告诉我，因为她知道我结婚后刚刚有了胡爽需要照顾，花钱的地方多，不想给我增加负担。她就一点一点地攒钱，一点一点的还，几年后她和我说，终于把“饥荒”（欠别人钱的俗语）还清了。

父亲刚离开时，母亲非常的不适应，曾急切的想和教会里的一位单身男士结婚，那位男士也表达过这个愿望，但我母亲想来想去，最终还是放弃了。或许是为了我和弟弟有个家还在的感觉，也或许是担心后续的家庭矛盾她应付不了吧。就这样，母亲和弟弟一家卖了原来的房子，又买了新房子。主要是怕在旧房子那里有过多的思念，对身体不好。

母亲和弟弟一家共同生活了二十多年，非常的融洽，我则每逢节假日会和家人去一起聚餐，一家人还是那么的其乐融融，毕竟有母亲在的地方就是我的家，真正意义上的家。母亲没有什么不良嗜好，也不喜欢和邻居老太太在楼下晒太阳、闲聊天，最喜欢的就是聚会，在家查经。再就是接胡博的孩子放学，在家做饭。

母亲从七十五岁以后明显的感觉记忆力不如从前了，会经常忘记回家的路，即便到了家也会敲错门，严重的时候有几次被路上的好心人送到了就近的派出所，然后打电话让胡博去接回家，那时是2018年底前的几个月。2019年年三十前，那时东平刚刚被查出患病进了医院，过了年之后，母亲还在胡博一家人的带领下来看望过东平。春节假期结束后，胡博和弟妹要上班，家里无人照顾母亲，只能将她送到第七人民医院住院。





其实母亲患的是“老年痴呆症”，就是阿尔兹海默症，基本上无法医治，只能靠吃药延缓症状。胡博和弟妹每个星期都会接母亲回家住一晚，在家洗澡，换衣服等等。后来随着中国所谓的疫情情况严重，不允许经常回家了，只能雇一个人 24 小时在医院照顾母亲，弟妹也会每周去给母亲洗澡、换衣服。我也会隔一段时间去医院探视，陪着聊一聊。不去的时候，会点一份烤鸡腿等的外卖送进去给母亲吃。

父亲的履历

下面的大部分内容摘自截止 1988 年胡爽爷爷的简历材料：

胡玉珍同志生平简介

胡玉珍，汉族，曾用名胡裕锡。1940 年 9 月 3 日（（阴历庚辰年八月初二，属龙）出生于山东省莱西县日庄镇胡家都村，原籍亦为此地。他拥有大专学历，无学位，曾任中学副校长，职称为中学一级教师。截至 1988 年，月工资为 116 元，身体状况健康。

家庭主要成员

胡玉珍的配偶修兰花，1941年2月20日（辛巳年正月二十五，属蛇）出生，汉族，中专学历，无学位，无党派，1988年月工资97元，退休前为青岛市吴家村小学高级教师。两人育有二子：长子胡明，1968年3月26日（戊申年二月二十八，属猴）出生，曾在青岛化工学院化工设备与机械专业学习，共青团员；次子胡博，1970年5月26日（庚戌年四月二十二，属狗）出生，曾在青岛广播电视大学对外经济贸易专业学习，共青团员。

胡玉珍的父亲胡光照，于1958年9月在原籍因病去世，享年73岁（1885年出生，乙酉年，属鸡）。母亲王秀英，于1959年5月在原籍因病去世，享年60岁（1899年出生，己丑年，属牛）。

亲戚情况

胡玉珍共有兄弟姐妹四人，弟兄中他排行第三。大哥胡裕显，生于1923年2月9日（属猪），在莱西县日庄镇胡家都村务农，中共党员；二哥胡裕丰，生于1932年（属猴），在莱西县日庄镇委员会工作，中共党员。大嫂孙桂卿、二嫂周桂卿均为务农群众。他的姐姐生于1918年（属马），于1978年因病去世，享年60岁；姐夫王同茂，在莱西县日庄镇路南埠村务农，群众。

岳父修世瑛于1958年因急病肠绞杀去世，年仅38岁（1920年出生，庚申年，属猴）。岳母徐桂芳（1922年出生，享年86岁），在莱阳县石河头乡上蒲格庄村务农，群众。内弟修德云、修德雨、修德曙，均在莱阳县石河头乡上蒲格庄村务农，群众。

学习经历

由于农村上学较晚，胡玉珍9岁多才上小学。1949年2月至1956年7月，他在莱西县日庄镇胡家都村小学学习（证明人胡裕希）。此后因家庭原因一度辍学，1956年8月至1957年7月在家务农（证明人胡裕训）。17岁时，他重新入学，于1957年9月至1960年8月在山东省莱西二中学习（证明人赵瑞兴）。初中毕业后因品学兼优被保送至山东省莱阳师范学习，1960年9月至1963年7月在校就读（证明人刁桂兰）。

参加工作与入团、入党情况

1963年8月，胡玉珍于山东省莱阳师范毕业后，由国家分配至青岛常州路小学参加工作（该校临近太平路小学，已于2000年左右注销）。

在入团和入党方面：1956年2月，他在莱西县胡家都村小学，由张英花、胡裕希介绍加入中国共产主义青年团；1966年2月6日，在青岛四十五中学，由王荃仁、陈家荣介绍加入中国共产党；1970年1月，经支部大会讨论决定按期转正。他没有加入过任何民主党派。

建国前，胡玉珍未参加过任何进步组织与团体。此后他多次参加各类进修学习：1965年2月至8月，在山东省教育学院学习政治科学理论，学习期满成绩及格结业；1973年7月至9月，在中共青岛市委党校学习马列主义理论；1983年3月至7月，学习教育理论专业半年，考核成绩及格结业；1987年，在山东大学主考的中央广播电视大学党政干部基础课学习期满，全部课程成绩合格毕业。1988年，他在青岛五十三中学被评为中学一级教师专业技术职务。他未学习过外语，也没有特长和爱好的记录。

奖励与处分

胡玉珍在校期间及工作中多次获得荣誉：1960年在莱西二中初三毕业时因品学兼优被保送莱阳师范；1965年7月在山东教育学院学习政治理论期间，被评为“五好学员”；1976年在青岛二十三中被评为市局先进工作者；1977至1978年在青岛二十三中学出席青岛市文教战线先进代表会议；1987年参加中央电大学习，被评为高教自学积极分子；1988年、1989年被市教育局评为局校容校貌积极分子。他没有任何处分记录，历史上无被捕、被俘、脱党、脱队和失掉组织关系的情况，未参加过反动组织，在“文化大革命”中亦无错误记录。

工作经历与后续经历

1963年8月至1965年1月，胡玉珍的第一份工作是在青岛常州路小学任教师（证明人刘巨斋）。该校最初为1947年秋创办的私立复真小学，1956年改为公办常州路小学，后并入太平路小学，原校址（青岛市市南区常州路5号）不再独立办学。1965年2月至1965年8月，他在

山东省教育学院学习（证明人李景道）。1965年9月至1972年8月，在青岛四十五中学任教师（证明人胡正珠）。1972年9月至1974年5月，在青岛二十三中学任教师（证明人宋立建）。1974年5月至1979年3月，任青岛二十三中学教导主任（证明人宋立建）。1979年4月至1984年12月，任青岛二十三中学副校长（证明人宋立建）。

在此期间，他的长子胡明于1981年9月至1984年7月在青岛二十三中学读初中，以全校第一名的成绩毕业，父亲曾亲自教过他的政治课。1985年1月至1987年8月，胡玉珍任青岛二十三中学总务主任（证明人朱正亮），此时长子已考入青岛第十六中学读高中并随后考取大学。1987年8月起，他调任青岛五十三中学副校长（证明人朱日显）。

需要说明的是，1984年底中学校级领导班子调整时，因本人“文革”中的有关问题尚未查清，暂未安排原职，转任青岛二十三中学总务处主任。1987年8月，这些问题基本查清后，他被调至青岛五十三中学担任副校长。那时他47岁，正值年富力强，而五十三中学位于错埠岭社区，是一所新校舍，正是可以充分发挥作用的阶段。

健康与晚年

在担任青岛二十三中学总务主任期间，胡玉珍分管校办工厂。该厂当时为医院制作X射线铁皮隔离房——一种约两米见方的立方体，设有门和升降板用于射线查体透视。内外墙均需喷漆，其中内墙还需衬铅制隔离板。喷漆工序包括一遍暗红色底漆和两遍白色面漆。胡玉珍当时防护意识不强，虽然佩戴口罩，但在进入车间时仍吸入大量油漆和稀料气味，长期积累对身体造成了隐性损害。

1995年上半年的一天，他下班回家后突然感到困倦乏力，随即到医院检查，被确诊为血液疾病。此后他在原青岛纺织医院（现青岛市中心医院）接受治疗，并因此调入青岛四十六中学挂职。经过持续医治，他最终于1997年9月16日（丁丑年八月十五）因病去世。

胡爽的姥爷姥姥一家

姥爷姥姥的家

姥爷张静安，就是胡爽妈妈的父亲，出生于1937年3月31日（阴历丁丑年二月十九，属牛）；姥姥王华荣，就是胡爽妈妈的母亲，生于1939年10月14日（阴历己卯年九月初二，属兔）；于2001年3月28日去世（阴历三月初四），享年62岁。

胡爽妈妈的父母可都不是青岛人，也是从外地来青岛的。妈妈的父亲是张静安，江苏如皋人，早年在连云港基地学习通讯，1956年之后分配到了青岛北海舰队通讯班，一直在那儿当兵，因为不断进步，逐渐被提干。1982年以干部身份复员到了青岛市四方公安分局工作，直到退休。孩子姥姥比姥爷来青岛早一些，可姥爷1956年来青岛时还不认识姥姥，那时候姥爷还是个士兵，新兵至少得干四年。他们俩是60年相识的，妈妈的母亲老家是威海文登，后来以优异的成绩考入青岛的学校并分配到中山路的工艺美术公司上班，结婚之后全家住在水清沟，她姥姥也到了青岛第五印染厂上班，位于青岛市瑞昌路和金华路交叉口以北，如今工厂已不在了。婚后育有三个女儿，老大是张春红，生于1968年；胡爽妈妈排第二，生于1969年；1974年老三玮玮出生以后，碰到姥爷所在部队分房子，全家于1975年搬到了台柳路9号的院子里。

妈妈的母亲是个做事雷厉风行的人，人也打扮的干净利索。在第五印染厂上班多年，人缘极好，似乎能和所有人相处的很好，说话办事都能恰到好处，骨子里透着一股中性偏男性的因素，我想究其原因妈妈的父亲性格比较懦弱的原因导致的。台柳路9号院位于山东路和西吴路的东南角，紧靠山东路东侧马路边，里面住了大约三四十户人家，都是海军的军人及其家属，确切地讲，是部队各级军官的住所。

站在山东路走进西吴路，沿着一排红瓦平房的北墙步行约30多米，右手侧有两个方形石头砌成的门柱。进去后一眼望向南面，是一条宽四米左右，长六七十米的红土砖路，院里有三四排平房合围成的一片“O”字形区域，呈窄长方形自北向南延伸，只在进入院子石柱门后有一个入口，就

像在那个“O”字形区域东北角开了个口子。

继续沿红土砖路前行，在“O”字形区域的南侧，有一座东西方向建成的二层楼。从中间一分为二，分成了东西两个部分，妈妈一家就住在楼西侧二楼偏中心的位置。沿着楼外的台阶上到二楼，正对着的是一家人，右手侧是两个独立的卫生间，分别供楼上的两家使用。左手边就是妈妈家了。正门房门朝北，进入后是一间6个平方左右的餐厅，有衣橱、洗衣机和折叠圆形餐桌等物品；左手边有个房门，进入后是一个小房间，6、7个平方，就是妈妈姊妹三人的卧室了，卧室没有窗，显得比较狭小。里面正对门是一张床，是妈妈妹妹的床，右侧是一个上下一体的两个单人床，妈妈睡下铺，姐姐睡上铺。门口还有一张书桌，供姐妹们学习用，墙上也有女生专用的挂历。

从餐厅可以直入主卧的门，这是一间朝阳面的房间，房间南侧是阳台。这一间稍大，有10几个平方，是妈妈的父母也就是姥姥和姥爷的房间，有那个年代必不可少的大衣橱，床和一对单人沙发和茶几，墙上有中式挂钟，和挂历。既是卧室也兼作会客厅。家里所有的地面都是水泥抹面的，非常细腻，并且因着父母的勤快，地面已经被拖的更加光亮、平整了，显得格外整洁。墙壁也粉刷一新，房间离地面一米多的部分刷着绿色油漆，即墙裙，透过南窗洒进的阳光，整个房间显得舒适宜人。

刚才说到正门房门朝北，是在露天的走廊上，但因为家里孩子多，就索性将正门在内的露天走廊改造成了一间封闭的房间，当作家里的厨房用了。这个房间的门更大一些，也是正式意义上的家门了。进入家门，靠右侧门框的地方是水龙头所在的位置，家里所有需用的水都从这里接，因为这是部队的家属院，水几乎不花钱。电费也是象征性的收一点。进入家门的左手边是案板，切菜用，门对着的东侧则是打火灶和油烟机等物品，虽是厨房，但仍然被收拾的一尘不染。

从南侧主卧阳台往外看的话，会看到楼下一套红色瓦顶的平房，三间屋大小，原来是为了东平的奶奶居住而申请加盖的房子。东平奶奶在这里是有户口的，她去世后，这间房子便租给别人使用了。楼上的房子，在东平父亲跟随我们一起住之后，也租给了别人。房子的租赁、修缮都是姥爷自己安排处理的。

姥爷是个非常勤快的人，他身上处处散发着南方人的特质，个子不高，

一米六左右，圆脸，胖瘦正合适，走路很快，说话也不慢，虽然南方口音很重，但丝毫不妨碍他的语气，坚定而且执着。退休前因为在公安系统工作的缘故，因此常年穿着警服，具体什么警衔我忘记了，一般上下班都骑自行车。一回到家便开始做家务，似乎在弥补孩子们小时候他经常不在家时缺失的家务活吧。



温馨的一家人

傍晚，家里的场景一般是这样的：姥姥回家前会买好晚饭必备的菜，到家后便开始洗菜，做晚饭。此时，孩子们也陆陆续续回到家中，三个女儿会时不时喊饿，姥姥会立刻停下手中的活，用身上的围裙擦擦手，赶紧进屋给她们拿出零食吃，一般是饼干、桃酥之类的，嘴里会不停的嘱咐，少吃点啊，别吃饱了就不吃饭了。然后回到厨房继续忙着做饭。三个女儿会放下书包，一边吃，一边到厨房，叽叽喳喳的和母亲诉说着当天发生的事情。姥姥则一边忙，一边嗯嗯啊啊的回应着女儿们的话，时不时问问女儿们是不是很开心，再就是嘱咐她们作业多不多啊，吃完零食赶紧去写作业吧。可这几个女儿哪肯放过一天没见到母亲的说话机会，一边吃一边应付着。等零食吃得差不多了便会跑进屋里各自找个地方写作业。

姥爷回家后倒是不急着做饭，他一般会立刻脱下警服，换上居家服，一般是那套旧的衣裤，穿着它们开始打扫家里的卫生，擦桌子、拖地、洗刷屋外的厕所等等，这些活都需要大量的水。前面说过，在这个部队的家属院，水基本上不花钱，但因为院里的人多，又加上是傍晚，家家户户都需要用水，所以水的压力不是特别大，因此家里进门的位置会一直放着一个塑料水桶，不停的接水，随用随取，水桶满了也不必管，自然会溢出来流到下水道。

家务活是干不完的，我一般会在周日去东平家，如果不去散步的话，就会帮着姥爷干家务活。我能干的活大致有几类，修理或更换家里的电线、保险丝，再就是上屋顶更换漏雨的瓦片，做些泥瓦匠的活，再早些时候还换过煤气罐，至于搬东西之类的体力活更是不在话下。最累的一次，是干了一上午泥瓦匠的活，累得我够呛，可东平的父亲却似乎有用不完的体力，那次干到了下午一点多才结束，我早已又累又饿了，姥姥也催着我们赶紧吃饭。那次，姥爷也觉得干活很辛苦，破天荒的拿出了一瓶啤酒给我吃饭时喝，正在我暗自高兴的时候，却忽然感觉喝到嘴里的啤酒没有味道，就是没有啤酒特有的那种味儿，啤酒在杯子里也没有泡沫。这时姥爷说，胡明，这个啤酒是别人给我的，放在床底下一年多了，平时也没人喝，你觉得怎么样啊？我这才看了看啤酒瓶子上的生产日期，乖乖，都过期半年多了，怪不得没味道。东平一边劝我别喝了，一边和姥姥一齐埋怨姥爷，怎么能拿过期的啤酒给我喝呢。姥爷嘿嘿的笑着，说，我不喝酒，也不知道，喝吧，反正没坏。姥爷就是这么一个人，凡事都很严谨，唯独对喝酒不行，几乎滴酒不沾。

泥瓦匠的活干过那一阵子就几乎没有了，更多的时候是些轻体力活，反正姥爷家没有男孩，我也就权当是个儿子了。有一段时间，我在大学那时候，一般会周日和东平出去玩，晚上在姥爷姥姥家和其他姊妹俩一起吃饭，那时每周日晚六点半都播放“猫和老鼠”，我喜欢的不得了，如果遇到和吃饭的时间，我必定会看完电视再到餐厅吃饭。现在想想，二位长辈对我还是非常包容的，要不然早就流露出不满情绪了。不过，即便我在餐桌上也基本上不说话，因为姥爷的威严对我来说确实有点压力，时刻注意自己的言行，怕让未来的老丈人不高兴。可姥姥就不一样了，对她来说，我几乎是半个儿子，吃饭时经常给我夹菜吃。

家里吃晚饭时一般是这样的场景。做晚饭的时候，姥爷就会把餐厅的折叠圆桌摆放好，家里的圆桌是个一米四左右直径的木板做的，上面刷着褐色的油漆，做工非常精细。姥爷会提前把碗、盘子的垫子，根据座位的位置提前摆放好。姥姥每做好一个菜，姥爷便会端过来摆好，直到所有的饭菜都摆放到位。这时候，姥爷便会喊三个女儿过来吃饭：红子、东平、玮玮，来吃饭啦。这时候的姥姥一般不会马上过来吃饭，她还要刷锅、收拾厨房，然后在女儿们的一再的呼唤下才会过来，一边走一边用围裙擦着手，便擦便问，怎么样？快尝尝菜咸还是淡啊？这时候的姥爷和我从来不会说话，倒是三个闺女会你一言，我一语的评价起来，“妈，这个菜咸了，那个菜淡了点”，姥姥这时候便会啧啧地说：“哎呀，我尝尝……，哎，太淡了，得加点盐”，这时候姥爷便会开口，“你们真有意思，快吃吧，嘿嘿”。我则在旁边，一声不吭，心想，多好吃的菜，还不赶紧吃？

家里的剩菜基本上都是姥爷吃，当然，特别好吃的剩菜除外，女儿们会抢着吃的。当三个女儿在边吃饭边聊天的时候，姥爷便会拿出剩菜，用开水浇上，一边搅拌一边吃。最后连菜带水都呼噜呼噜喝完了。姥姥每每这时便会说：“老张，别吃剩菜了，这些（新的菜）还不够你吃的？”，姥爷便会看大家一眼，说：“你们不吃我不得吃啊”，然后嘿嘿一笑。

似乎每顿饭都是这样，几乎没有例外。其实这个场景才是一个家的温馨场面，多和谐啊。

对孩子们格外的爱

东平比她姐姐仅隔了一年四个月的时间，不得不说，东平出生时就比较弱。我记得东平说，她在烟台复读期间就查出有胆囊炎，不久后体检又查出是乙肝病毒的大三阳携带者，为此我们结婚前，我还特意注射了对应的免疫针。姥姥自然也是知道这个情况，因此对东平的身体健康也格外的关注。尤其是饮食方面，姥姥会针对东平肠胃弱的特点，特意做一些美味又容易消化的饭菜给大家吃，并及时询问大家对饭菜的意见，所以诸如饭菜的咸淡会引起姥姥的格外注意，以免因为不合口味影响孩子们的胃口。

东平从烟台回青岛后便参加了工作，姥姥更是格外用心，那些每天看似不经意的询问，实际上是在了解孩子们为人处事的方法是不是恰当。一

旦发现对孩子不利的情况则会立即纠正，生怕在单位里受到伤害。一家人白天因为各自的工作和学习没法见面，晚上临睡前的时间都要忙自己的事情，只有晚饭的时间可以用来交流，既可以相互了解，又能互通有无，姥姥则像个教练一般，指导着三个女儿，那些听起来婆婆妈妈的话，实际上蕴含着长辈的智慧。姥姥和孩子们的谈话，姥爷一般不插话，但他的耳朵又不会落下一句话，都听的真真切切。他会在她们聊天时，开始收拾桌子上的饭菜，并将折叠桌子收起来立到餐厅窗户的旁边。

张春红和张如玮的身体状况都比较好，我没听东平说过她们俩的身体有什么不适。在工作方面，姥爷对孩子们都非常用心，三个女儿的工作，姥爷姥姥都没少操心，大姐在银行工作，当时正是银行效益最好的时候，工资高不高先不说，但是福利就比很多单位好很多，时不时的就会发钱、发福利。东平第一份工作在商场，工资就没有那么高了，因此会时不时在姥姥面前唠叨几句，寻思着要是和大姐一样在银行就好了。不过很快她就会开心起来，因为商场比较自由，还可以用员工优惠价给家里买日用品，而且有我这个编外“同事”陪着她，因此也就不再计较了。毕竟，大姐在银行工作也是非常辛苦的。

东平后来又去了电机厂也是姥爷托的熟人关系，但东平后来的表现可以说是大大出乎所有人的意料之外，不仅入厂考试成绩名列前茅，几年下来的工作成绩更是让厂长都大加赞赏。不得不说，从东平的职业经历来看，她是姥姥的“社会关系学”最得意的“关门弟子”，在二十多年的工作环境里，对人际关系的协调和分寸把握都在一般职员的水平之上，能熟练的驾驭机关单位里复杂的领导与领导、领导与中层、及其与员工之间错综复杂的关系。唯一的代价就是内心非常的累，捎带着也让她本就羸弱的身体非常疲惫，最终因病退出职场也在情理之中。上天也是公平的，一个人太累的时候就会给你换个出路。

东平是个思想活跃的人，平时的闲暇时光除了喜欢看电视剧，就是煲电话粥了。找姐妹、找朋友、找教会姊妹等等，几乎每次打电话都在半小时以上。后来我发现她打电话就相对于锻炼身体，每次打完后几乎都是身心愉悦的状态，好像做了一场思想和身体的健身操。在共同生活的时间里，我们的沟通也随着对信仰的追求深入，慢慢加深。尤其是疫情开始后，我们对人生、对基督教信仰的讨论和学习也越来越深入，知道了什么该是我

们坚持的，什么是我们该放手的，什么又是该放心交托的。信仰不是遥远的词，在生活的每个细节里才是有意义的。父母给了孩子们生命和最基本的教育，剩下的路靠正确的信仰和理念来完成。

三妹的工作也在局机关，相较于她二姐来说也是比较辛苦的，但她是大学本科毕业，因此也算专业对口，可以驾轻就熟地完成单位的工作。虽说她在驾驭人际关系方面没有发挥特别的优势，但似乎继承了母亲对佛学的一些观点，也对佛教倍加推崇，会借着佛经稳定自己在待人处世的方面带来的困惑，调整自己的情绪和心态。她很看重信仰对行为方面的影响，就是说一个人无论有什么信仰，如果没有在行为上有所改变，那就可以推断出，此人的信仰是有问题的。我和东平虽然表面上信奉基督教，但在她看来，要多祷告，求神帮助我们完成一些事情，而且要深入圣经的学习并达到“知行合一”。一个人如果行为没有达到信仰要求，并不是没有机会表现出来，而是对圣经没有彻底的学习和了解，当一个人真正懂得了某个道理，行为的改变便是水到渠成的事情。反过来说，一个人如果行为乖张、粗鄙，那么他的内在思维一定是“混乱”的。三妹的内心是高尚的，姥姥去世后，几乎没有人可以读懂她。

姥爷和姥姥对孩子们的教育总体看是成功的，因为他们俩凭着自己的全部身心，在复杂的社会环境中，托举着孩子们渐渐融入了人生这个大环境，教她们懂得了做人的道理和为人处世的技巧。在关心关爱孩子方面，他们做到了竭尽全力，问心无愧。

为什么让胡爽去美国读书和生活？

寻找真实的世界

首先，这对我们夫妇来说，是一个极其艰难的决定。这里说的“艰难”并不是单纯决定出国读书的一个念头，而是贯穿我们彼此之间的终生生活。胡爽要独自远赴异国他乡求学，离开从小熟悉的环境，离开生活了十六年熟悉的一切，离开父母、亲人，隔着大洋相望。那种日日夜夜的思念，是任何其他东西都无法填补的空缺。我们常常在夜里，在吃饭时，不知不觉想到她，想象她一个人在宿舍、在课堂、在街头，会不会觉得孤单，会不会想家。

但最终，我们还是下定了这个决心。如果要用一句话概括原因，那就是：我们不希望孩子在中国现行的教育环境中，学习那些与真实世界脱节的内容，慢慢形成一种与内心不一致的人生观。我们希望她能在一个更贴近真实、更允许个性表达的环境里，长成她自己想成为的样子。

中国的基础教育在知识传授上确实非常扎实，这一点我们从不否认。但那种“一考定终身”的高压模式，以及毕业后就业前景的不确定性，让太多家长夜不能寐。美国教育更注重学生的全程表现：除了标准化考试，GPA、社区参与、体育才能、领导经验、个人兴趣……这些都会被综合考量。我们希望胡爽能在一个不那么“唯分数论”的氛围中，慢慢找到属于自己的方向，按照她自己的意愿和信念去生活，而不是被单一的标准推着走。

在这里说一下胡爽父母亲身经历的学习、工作和生活氛围。我们出生在中国的文化大革命刚刚开始的上世纪60年代末期，小学期间还是比较松散的，初中便开始为是否参加高考作准备，如果参加的话就需要备考普通高中（相当于美国的9~12级），如果不打算参加，打算早一些参加工作，就可以进入职业高中，这样在高中毕业后直接进入企业工作。中国的小学、初中和高中年限和美国是相同的，分别是6年、3年、4年，相当于美国从Grade 1到Grade 12，不同的是中国的小学、初中和高中基本上不是同一个学校，不像美国可以在同一所学校读完K-12。

在中国，普通高中的学生要在高中期间备考心仪的大学，并为之刻苦学习，一旦达到了这些大学的入学标准便可以在大学完成四年的本科学业。中国普通大学的特点之一便是“入学难”，因为要参加严格的高考筛选，但毕业相对容易一些。不像欧美的一些大学，毕业难度非常大。

在上世纪 90 年代初期毕业的大学生还是可以分配工作的，但从 1992 年起，全国各地的毕业生陆陆续续不再保证可以分配工作，而要自己联系工作单位。胡爽爸爸那一代还是幸运的，成为最后可以分配工作的那一批毕业生。所谓的分配工作就是毕业后直接进入国营企事业单位工作，有了所谓的“铁饭碗”，生活便有了比较稳定的保障。而大多数进入职业高中的孩子毕业后的工作单位可谓五花八门，遍及社会的各行各业，甚至没有固定的工作。

再进一步说，在国企单位工作，假如运气和能力足够的话，会被吸收进入中国共产党党组织，成为一名党员，这样以后的路便大概率朝干部培育的方向发展了。很不幸的是，我在大学临毕业前就“被”入党了，那时候，我作为积极进取的学生干部不入党都觉得对不起辅导员和其他同学期待的眼光。这时候，你会慢慢发现自己的生活和工作渐渐分不开了，你的家庭生活和圈子始终在围绕着工作圈子，以及由此慢慢扩大的工作圈子。最终你会发现你的生活圈子、工作圈子、朋友圈子实际上都在围绕一个共同的圈子：党组织。是的，如果从各个圈子的性质来看，圈子之间不该有联系，但如果党组织根深蒂固的进入了一个人的大脑，并被时时处处提醒你该与上级组织保持一致时，你就会发现，所有的圈子都被党组织这个利益发源地牢牢地连结在一起，无论你是否承认或否认，这种链接始终都在提醒你，不要出格，周围的人都在看着你。

有人可能会问，至于连结这么紧密吗？自己的生活和工作难道分不开吗？我可以这样解释：宪法规定了所有人的权利和义务，但在党组织这个前提下统统变为另外的含义。党组织的利益高于一切，甚至宪法和法律，这就是与民主国家不同的地方。如果一个美国人理解了这一点，他就可以理解为什么在民主国家法律规定的行为在中国共产党党组织的面前都是低层次的存在了。举例来说，言论、集会、信仰、出版等等自由在法律面前你都有，但在党组织面前就另当别论了。

中国人，如果碰巧是个党员，你在工作中需要做的不是创新，而是服

从上级的决策，保持自己的言行与上级组织一致才是最正确的事情。其他的事情永远都是其他的。认识到这一点时自己内心还是很难过的，始终在埋怨上帝为什么让我们出生在这个红色江山里，后来想想，总不能让自己的孩子也这样吧？可偏偏有件事让我下定了决心送孩子出国。

真正让我们下定决心的，是胡爽高一那年的一件事。那天我带她去台东步行街一家饭店吃午饭，等菜的空档，她拿出政治课本在背诵。我看着她那么稚嫩的脸庞，却在认真背那些连我们做父母都觉得与现实生活格格不入的内容，心里突然涌起一阵酸楚和无力感。那一刻我很想把书合上，告诉她“不用背了”，但我知道我做不到。我只能在心里默默想：或许，我们能为她做的最大努力，就是让她有机会去一个更开放的环境里，看看世界本来的样子。

让孩子到美国留学和生活实际上就是逃离中国，作为他们的父母无法陪她一起去，因为我们的父母已经年迈、多病，不能离开，所以只能让她出去。我们已经受够了现有的工作和生活环境，在我们无能为力的时候能做的最大努力，便是让我们的孩子远离这个一党专政的国家，以及处处对权力马首是瞻的社会环境。同时希望她能在世界观形成的关键时期，看到世界的多样性。将来她可以选择留在海外，也可以选择回国，但这种选择是基于“看过世界”之后的判断，而不是因为没得选。

我们最大的心愿，是希望她能活得更真实一些，更自由一些，更像她自己。

胡爽留学的经历

胡爽在离开青岛去美国之前住在青岛市市南区香港中路 147 号的楼上，那时候她才是个高一学生，相对于美国的 **Grade 10**。为什么呢？从中美的学习年级对比，中国的小学需要 6 年，初中需要 3 年，高中需要 3 年，因此说中国高一的大约相对于美国的 **Grade 10**。胡爽刚到美国上课时，感觉美国的课程进度比中国慢一些，这一点可以从中美学生学习的课程内容比较得出结论，以数学为例，胡爽的成绩在中国属于中等偏上水平，但刚到美国时，参加俄勒冈州的数学竞赛，居然得了奖。这并不是

说美国的学习内容和水平比中国低，这只是两个国家对于各级学生的要求不同而已。

中国学生从幼儿园、小学、初中、高中，乃至大学的学习难度相比于美国学生的学习强度的趋势大致是相反的，也就是说中国孩子小时候的要求比美国孩子高，内容深，但在大学这一分水岭却相差甚大。这一点不是本书的主题，就不赘述了。

应该说胡爽不属于那种“天生”就非常聪明的学生，但学习还是很认真的，从上小学到初中，成绩大都处于班级里中等水平。她更多的课余时间除了完成作业和学习之外，还有一项任务就是要练习弹钢琴。从小学开始，我记不清从几年级开始的，胡爽在妈妈的期待和引领下开始了钢琴考级生涯，从一级一直到十级，从考级到参加各种钢琴比赛，妈妈带着她也去过多个城市。钢琴考级除了培养了胡爽的音乐素养之外，最实用的便是在初中毕业考试时作为一个加分项，优先被高中的学校所接纳。

不过最主要的还是要看考试成绩，胡爽进入高中的中考成绩不算太高，没能达到进入青岛九中的分数线，却达到了青岛十五中的分数线，因此在被十五中录取后，紧接着就依托熟人的关系，直接办理了到九中的借读手续。从此后，胡爽在九中上课，我则每学期都要跑到十五中找她的班主任去办理一些日常手续，以延续她在十五中的学籍。在九中借读是要额外收费的，不到一年的时间花费是四万元，还是比较贵的。





胡爽高一下学期，胡爽妈妈为胡爽找的一个主日学教会里组织了一场活动，里面一位张姊妹邀请了美国 **Hosanna Christian School** 的 **Jeff Mudrow** 校长，来青岛举办招收国际学生的见面会。我们一家随后在张姊妹的带领下与 **Jeff** 校长见了面，并咨询了一些细节问题。那天是 2012 年 3 月 26 日晚，在 **Jusco** 的星巴克。其实在一个月前仰望教会也组织了一场类似活动，那是惠顿联盟来青岛招生，我们一家人也参加了，也萌生了出国留学的念头。这次 **Jeff** 的到来为我们一家人提供了面对面沟通了解的机会，因此便逐渐下定了决心送胡爽出国留学。

我当时在市南区分公司上班，时间比较充裕，因此便着手为胡爽准备护照和签证申请的相关手续，因为见过 **Jeff**，他回国后于 7 月底发来了 **I-20** 表格，为胡爽的 **F1** 签证提供了保障。因为这次属于 **Hosanna** 在中国招生国际学生，因此没有提语言问题，也就是不需要 **Toefl** 考试便可以直接入学。8 月 2 日带胡爽去北京领事馆面签，8 月 7 日便收到了签证，非常顺利，感恩。

这期间，张姊妹给予了很大帮助，如果没有她的牵线搭桥，我们一家便可能无缘出国留学了。但当时由于张姊妹正在犹豫，是不是以中介的身份帮助那些由她介绍而打算留学的家庭，因此我们和张姊妹之间没有谈及如何酬谢她的帮助。而且从与 **Jeff** 见面后的学校联系到 **I-20** 表格申请都是我在与 **Hosanna** 学校联系，因此也不太清楚如何酬谢张姊妹。但在我

们收到 I-20 表格后便立即给张姊妹装了人民币五千元，聊表感谢之意。胡爽去了美国后，又借圣诞节见面之际带去了部分现金给了张姊妹，那时候她们全家已经都在美国了，算是再次表达感谢，要不是没有她的帮助，我们的留学梦恐怕没有那么快来临。

胡爽在九中高一结束后的那个暑假，她便去了美国。8月21日，正式开启了她的美国留学之旅，爸爸、妈妈、奶奶、姥爷，全家人一起到机场送胡爽登机，场面平和，胡爽就像出门旅行一般，头也没回的离开了全家人的视线.....。多年后我想，也许她当时不回头有别的原因吧。

胡爽到美国后，从 **Grade 10** 开始读，据说语言不是问题，听课与交流都算顺利，只是最初的几个月不太愿意和美国同学交流，喜欢和亚洲同学一起玩，而且说汉语，让其他路过的同学感到不习惯。**Jeff** 校长和我提出了这个问题。其实这种现象如同成人之间的关系一样，不熟悉的人，又加上有国际区别，不喜欢交流也是正常现象。这是其一，再就是胡爽不太愿意运动，只喜欢安安静静学习看书，这与其他美国同学是一个非常显著的差异点。说实话，这些行为模式和在国内的学生有类似之处，而美国学生的上课活跃、每天下午放学后的体育锻炼和社区活动等等，都透露着显著的不同习惯。胡爽初到一个新环境，自从意识到这些差异后，花了近一个学期的时间，逐渐融入了这个集体，上课变得积极了，下午的课外活动，选择了足球和篮球，还加入了学校的校队，性格也慢慢开朗起来。

住宿方面尤其感恩，当初要去美国上学前，学校已经为胡爽安排了寄宿家庭，但就在胡爽即将到达时，家庭男主人的工作发生了变化，无法继续履行寄宿家庭的职责了，便临时决定住在了 **Jeff** 家里。**Jeff** 是学校的校长，又非常了解孩子的行为模式，住在他家是再合适不过的了。**Jeff** 有一个非常漂亮的妻子，曾获得过州选美冠军，为人谦和，随 **Jeff** 在学校里担任 **Kindergarten** 的教师。他们有一个儿子，比胡爽小四岁，非常帅气的美国小伙子，也在这个学校。住在 **Jeff** 家，如同胡爽有了第二个家庭一般，似乎和新的父母、弟弟生活在一起。当然还有 **Grandpa**，他是 **Jeff** 妻子的父亲，1米8多的个子，非常白净、消瘦，身体健康。新的一家人平时一同生活，有机会还一起开车旅游，胡爽还有幸在圣诞节期间认识了 **Jeff** 住在 **Oregon**（俄勒冈）的父母及其他亲友，他们都非常喜欢胡爽的到来，尤其是 **Jeff** 的妈妈 **Casey**，对胡爽亲切的不得了。

在 Hosanna 上了一年的课程后，Jeff 因为工作调动，2013 年 8 月起，要去位于 Michigan 州的 Lenawee Christian School 担任校长一职，随后他询问我们要不要让胡爽也随着转学到新学校，同样也可以住在他家里。这样的好事怎么能拒绝呢？求之不得，我们便答应了。不过新问题也随之而来，Jeff 之所以到新学校任职，当然是因为薪资待遇更好，然而学生的学费自然也就更高了。胡爽在 Hosanna 的学费每年一万两千多美元，新学校的学费三万五千多美元，学校环境也更优雅。但其实这一点非常合理，美国的学校，包括后来的大学，排名约往前，学费就越高，师资力量和学校品质也就越高，其社会影响力和被认可的程度也越高。

胡爽在 Lenawee 的两年学习还是有一些坎坷的，因为她也需要面临美国的高考，即 ACT 考试，但如果选择美国的大学继续深造的话，她作为国际学生还需要有 TOEFL 成绩。为此，她妈妈可谓是操心之极，趁胡爽暑假回国的时间，提前联系了位于北京新东方的语言学校，在学校附近租房子，短租 1~2 个月的时间，她妈妈负责胡爽的起居，胡爽负责埋头学习，恶补英语应试水平。那时候她妈妈在家休假，自然时间很充裕，可以陪胡爽学习。但我那时还要上班，所以只能周末跑去北京待两天，那时才能一家人团聚。第一次去北京学习是在 2013 年的 6 月上旬，在北京的荣上居小区租了房子，每天步行到新东方学习。之后的每一年也基本上是这样的安排，只有学习的任务完成后才考虑回青岛与亲人团聚。

胡爽在北京的学习还是有成效的，虽然她没经历过中国国内的高考，但这种辛勤的付出也算是体会到了一些“高考”的气息。胡爽在 Lenawee 顺利毕业了，也顺利拿到了 Indiana University 的录取通知书。我和胡爽妈妈为了参加胡爽 2015 年 5 月底的高中毕业典礼，提前 3 个月就申请到了美国的 B1/B2 旅游签证，那时正值奥巴马执政时期，我们拿到了十年期的签证。不仅如此，我还为胡爽妈妈的父亲、姐姐和姐姐的孩子申请了签证，为他们日后出国留学和旅游提前做好了准备。这些都是我自己做的，省了不少中介费吧。

这个签证为胡爽的爸爸妈妈帮了大忙，那一年去了两次美国，分别是 5 月和 9 月。月底参加了胡爽的高中毕业典礼，9 月份去带着胡爽考察了几个美国大学，作为 Indiana University 的替代学校。

为了参加胡爽的毕业典礼，我和胡爽妈妈做了我们力所能及的所有事

情，先是分别购买了一套新衣服作为典礼上穿着、展示来自中国风采的需要，再一个就是和胡爽妈妈为到 Jeff 家里参加毕业生家庭来访的客人预备了来自中国风格的美食。我们先是到当地的超市购买了相关食材原料，然后几乎彻夜未眠为客人们包了中国饺子，除了面粉原色的外，还包了橙色、绿色面皮的彩色饺子，又额外制作了一大盆中国特色的凉拌菜，也就是美式沙拉。果然不出所料，这些五颜六色的中国饺子（Dumplings）和中式沙拉的凉拌菜深受来访的同学和邻居们的欢迎，几乎被吃了个精光。

再说说胡爽上大学的一个插曲。胡爽进入 IU 后，过了没有多久就察觉到了一个问题，那就是 IU 的社会资源不是特别的丰富，于是便逐渐萌生了转学的想法，这相对于需要重新提交一份 TOEFL 和 ACT 成绩单，也就是要再经历一次大学入学考试。经过和我们俩的商量，我和她妈妈决定再去一趟美国，和胡爽共同考察几个胡爽心仪的大学校园。于是，三个月后，在 9 月底我们再次来到了美国，租了一辆车，全家三人从 IU 启程，陆续走访了卡内基梅隆大学、宾夕法尼亚大学、麻省理工学院、哈佛大学等。既然要转学，考试是免不了的，经过胡爽的不懈努力，最终被 Boston University 录取了，于 2017 年正式就读 BU，直至毕业。但因为两个学校的学分制不同，胡爽需要补足 BU 的学分要求，因此比预定的毕业时间延迟了近半年的时间才拿到毕业证，我和她妈妈也就没有再去参加她的毕业典礼。



（照片：胡爽毕业，照片中的人是妈妈张东平、胡爽、爸爸胡明；Teresa、Shirley、Jeff Mudrow）

胡爽在 BU 的学习生活很圆满，在大学三年级的下学期便找到了自己喜欢的工作，她当时所竞聘的公司是一家做 AI 软件开发的公司 Evisort，胡爽很幸运地从 200 多个应聘者中被录取了。我记得是 2018 年 3 月应聘这家公司实习，2019 年 5 月底份正式签订了工作合同。因为那时候她已经拿到了毕业证。在此之前，正是特朗普的第一个任期，对未获得毕业资格的人工作机会是禁止的。2021 年 3 月，她所在的公司因为规模扩大，从波士顿搬到了旧金山硅谷，所以胡爽也一起搬家到了旧金山，然后一直到我写这篇文章的时候，她一直在旧金山住。

从 2012 年 7 月底到美国上高中，一直到我们最后见面的 2018 年 1 月，这期间几乎每年暑假都会回中国。2014 年起为了考取大学或转学，每个暑假胡爽回国后我们都会在北京找专门的托福语言学习班学习，她的妈妈陪着她在北京住。而我那时候工作比较忙，没有办法长时间请假，只好每个周末坐动车去北京，然后住两天再回青岛上班。

那一段时间很辛苦，那也很充实，但更幸福。我们暑假的时候就去北京租房子，租到公寓之后在那儿陪胡爽学习功课。生活条件比较简陋，但因离辅导学校近，能够有一个比较好的辅导学习效果。所以一家三口人面对这些困难的时候，能团结一致，也是苦中作乐。每次离开他们娘俩时都是那么的难舍难分，返程车上能陪伴我的总是汪峰的那首歌《北京，北京》，似乎那首歌唱出了我的心声。2018 年 1 月 16 日我和她妈妈送别胡爽到美国后，一直到她的母亲因病离世，我们一直没有见面，直到现在。

2019 年春节的时候，原本是胡爽打算要回中国的时候，但因为 2019 年家里发生了一件重要的事情，就是胡爽的妈妈生病，从 2019 年 2 月 1 号一直到 2022 年的 12 月 15 号，这整整 4 年的时间，我一直在国内陪着胡爽妈妈，因为这几年也正好是全世界新冠疫情流行的关键时期，而中国又实行所谓“动态清零”的政策，几乎让人寸步难行，耽误了很多该做的事情。这段时间是我们家非常艰难的时候，因此我和她妈妈也不希望胡爽回国。不过，话又说回来，即便胡爽想回国也比较困难，而且我们即便在国内也没有办法到外地去。

关于胡爽妈妈患病的问题，我在一本书里面写过，在这里我就不多讲了，下面说一下我们家的一些情况。

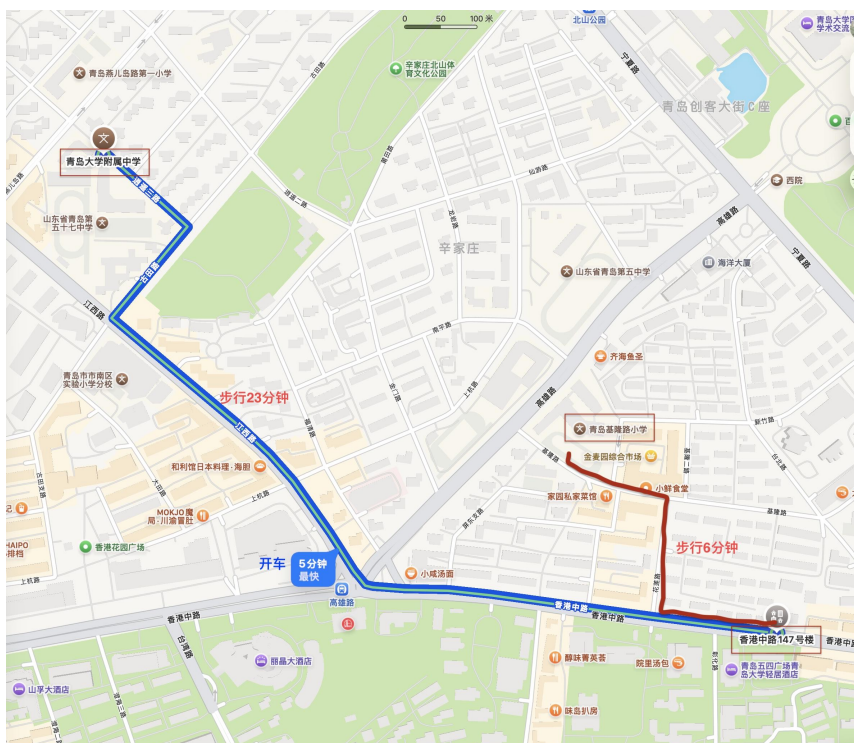
胡爽是1996年6月28的生日，她出生之后受到了家族里非常好的待遇，之所以这么说，是因为当时胡爽出生的时候。我和她妈妈两双方的父母都在，胡爽都见过他们。唯一的遗憾便是，我父亲当时身患重病一直在住院。

虽然说是住院，但毕竟胡爽还见到了她的爷爷，我印象里胡爽还给爷爷拿过老花镜。那时，胡爽1岁左右，刚刚会蹒跚走路，爷爷当时在我的床上躺着，看见胡爽就说，去给爷爷把眼镜拿过来，爷爷要看报纸。于是，胡爽便颠颠地跑到爷爷奶奶的房间，把眼镜抓在手里，又颠颠地跑回来，把眼镜递给了爷爷。这个场景一直在我的脑海里，经久不散。爷爷是在胡爽1岁零3个月的时候去世的，但在此之前的家庭聚餐里胡爽也在爸爸妈妈的怀抱里与爷爷、奶奶、叔叔同桌就餐，也有照片合影。

胡爽的简历

说到这里，我把胡爽的简历写一写吧：

1999年9月至2002年7月，在青岛市北第三教工幼儿园（2021年改名为市北区第三实验幼儿园），那时候我们一家租住在错埠岭二路的三小区，离奶奶家有两站路的距离，这个幼儿园离奶奶家更近，二百米的距离。很多情况下我和胡爽妈妈下班来不及按时接胡爽放学时，都是要麻烦奶奶接胡爽回家，等我们俩下班后再去奶奶家接胡爽回家。姥爷姥姥家实际上离胡爽幼儿园也有大约两站路的距离，都不远。**2002年9月至2004年8月**，在青岛师范附属小学（2011年改名为青岛五十三中学小学部），和幼儿园不到200米的距离，不用说，奶奶也肩负起时不时接胡爽放学的任务啦。**2003年**因为我们买了房子，搬到了市南区的香港中路，因此胡爽三年级转了学校。**2004年9月至2008年7月**，在青岛市基隆路小学上学，新学校离着新家也就是400米的距离，那时候因为姥姥已去世，我们买新房子后，姥爷就一直住在我们家，因此胡爽的上学、放学都是姥爷接送了。



2012年8月至2013年8月，胡爽到美国后的第一个学校便是在 Klamath Falls, Oregon 的 Hosanna Christian School 上 Grade 10，如前所述，经历了从懵懂到熟悉的一系列过程；2013年8月至2015年5月，在 Lenawee Christian School 上 Grade 11 和 12，在这里胡爽找到了与同学融洽相处、在和谐的环境中学习的全新生活，算是真正融入了这个新环境；2015年8月至2017年5月，在 Indiana University 上了大学的一、二年级，也是在这个地方，胡爽有了自己独立思考、独立展开生活选择的过程；2017年8月至2019年12月，在 Boston University 就读了两年并毕业，在这里胡爽有了更开阔的视野和更明确的人生目标，她不仅完成了学业，更是在毕业前的2018年3月，就应聘进入了她心仪的创业公司 Evisort 上班。截止写这篇书稿时，胡爽已经在这家公司工作了8年多的时间，包括2024年9月被 Workday 公司收购，直到现在，刚刚升职为 P4 Senior Software Engineer。

后记

书稿写到此处，已是深夜。窗外青岛的海风带着初夏的湿润吹进书房，就像多年前胡爽还在身边时，那些寻常又不寻常的夜晚。

孩子，这就是爸爸想对你说的话。从你爷爷辈从莱西、莱阳的农村赤手空拳来到青岛，到你妈妈和我这一代在体制内摸爬滚打、在信仰里跌跌撞撞，再到你独自一人跨过大洋去闯荡世界——三代人，三种活法，但有一条线从没有断过，那就是不管走多远，你的根始终在这里。

青岛的红瓦绿树、海风啤酒，不会因为距离的改变而褪色。爷爷奶奶曾经站在讲台上粉笔飞扬的地方、你姥爷姥姥在台柳路9号院忙里忙外的身影、你小时候在伊春路楼顶平台滑旱冰的笑声……这些看似普通的人和事，拼在一起就是你的中国，你的家。

也许有一天你有了自己的孩子，他们会问："妈妈，你的家乡是什么样子的？"到那时，你不需要翻箱倒柜地回忆，只需要打开这本书，带着他们一起读。从青岛的海边读到崂山的云雾，从爷爷的粉笔字读到妈妈的钢琴声，从你十六岁独自跨过太平洋的勇气，读到我们在这里日日夜夜的牵挂。

是的，孩子，你在中国有个家。这个家不在户籍本上，不在房产证上，它在青岛五月的风里，在每年七月海雾弥漫的栈桥上，在所有爱你的人心里。这个门永远为你敞开着，哪怕隔着十二个小时的时差、一万两千公里的太平洋。

愿你在远方自由地飞，也记得回头看一看——这里永远有一盏灯，为你亮着。

胡明

2026年5月28日 于青岛

（全书完）

My Child, You Have a Home in China

Author: Hu Ming

July 22, 2025

This book is a true account based on the author's personal experiences. It is written to recall family life and spiritual growth, and has no connection to any political stance or organization. Any descriptions of systems or institutions in this book are simply the author's objective experiences within his environment, and are offered for the reader's rational consideration.

With gratitude to Hu Bo, Hu Zhongshan, and other family members and friends for their help.

"My Child, You Have a Home in China" (Real-Name Edition)

Author: Hu Ming (Ming Hu)

First revised edition published July 22, 2025

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Dongping's Blessing:

May the husband become a man who loves the Lord, a spiritual leader in the family.

May the wife become a woman loved greatly by God, a helper and companion to her husband, and a positive spiritual influence on her children — learning the character and attributes of the Lord, becoming the wise woman described in Proverbs 31.

May the children grow to love the Lord and become influential experts in their fields, bringing glory to God.

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Preface

Today is July 20, 2025. For quite some time now, I've wanted to write an article — or rather, a long article, something you might even call a book. The reason is this: my daughter moved to the United States to attend high school when she was just sixteen. She finished high school, went to college, and after graduating, found a job. I suspect that someday she will get married there, have children of her own, and build her own life. And I, as her father, will most likely not be able to live in America. So our family will always live separated by an ocean.

Now, "separated" may not be quite the right word — Hu Shuang, my daughter, is not yet married and doesn't have children of her own, so we are still one family. But I know that if one day she has her own kids, she will have her own new family. There will be two families then. And I wonder: will her family and her children gradually forget the home they have in China? Or perhaps one day Hu Shuang might come back to live in China with her own family — that too is unknown. But I do know one thing: her children will need to understand their mother — and the country she came from.

They could certainly learn about it from Hu Shuang herself. But I think they will also need their maternal grandpa — me — to tell them. So this idea took root in my heart: to write down everything about our family's life, about the country we live in, and about all the things that made us who we are. That way, even if Hu Shuang and her children never have the chance to come live in China, they can still open this book and discover what kind of people her mother's father was, what kind of family her father came from, and what that world was really like. That is the heart

of why I am writing this book.

The Country Where Hu Shuang Spent Her Youth

Part 1: China — A Nation Moving Forward Fast

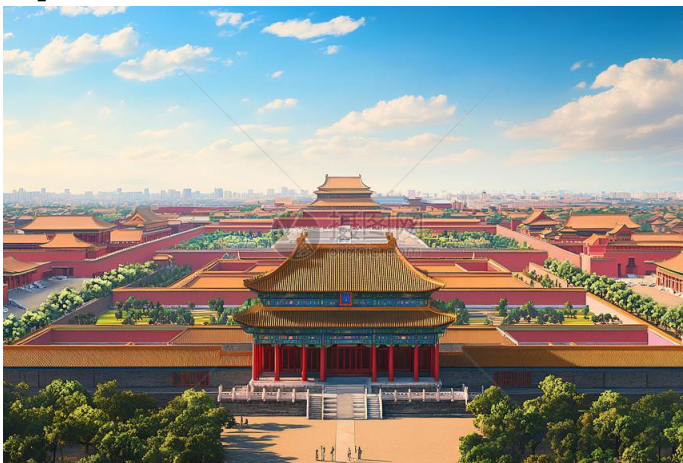
Imagine standing on the Roof of the World — the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, surrounded by snow-covered mountains, with air so thin it feels like being on the moon. Travel eastward for more than three thousand kilometers, and you'll reach the coast of Shandong Province, where the land meets the East China Sea. This is China.

The country spans 9.6 million square kilometers — about the same size as the United States plus Alaska. But its population is over 1.4 billion — four times that of America.

Two great mother rivers flow from west to east. The Yangtze River is longer than the Mississippi. The Yellow River is the cradle of Chinese civilization, watering countless farmlands for thousands of years and feeding this enormous nation. The climate changes dramatically from north to south: Harbin's winters are colder than Minnesota's, while the tropical island of Hainan feels like Hawaii. In the northwest lie vast deserts; in the southwest, lush rainforests. Pandas roll around in bamboo forests, camels plod across the Gobi Desert, and monkeys swing through southern jungles.



China is one of the Four Great Ancient Civilizations, with five thousand years of continuous history. The Great Wall stretches over 21,000 kilometers — long enough to go from New York to Los Angeles and back, with plenty to spare. Climb the wall at Badaling or Mutianyu, and you step right into an ancient legend. Beijing's Forbidden City covers 72 hectares and contains 9,999 rooms — the emperor dared not build a full 10,000, afraid of outshining Heaven itself. Beneath its red walls and golden tiles, dragons dance and phoenixes soar — the real-life setting of countless palace dramas.



The Terracotta Warriors of Xi'an are even more astonishing. In 1974, farmers digging a well accidentally uncovered over 8,000 life-sized clay soldiers, horses, and chariots, standing in battle formation, guarding Emperor Qin's tomb for more than two thousand years. Every face is different — as though ancient craftsmen left behind a 3D-printed army. It has been called the "Eighth Wonder of the World."



And that's just the beginning. You can go boating on Kunming Lake in the Summer Palace. The Hanging Temple clings to a cliff like something out of an Indiana Jones adventure. The floating mountains of Zhangjiajie inspired the planet Pandora in the movie Avatar.

Today's China feels like something out of the future. It is the world's second-largest economy, having evolved from "the world's factory" to a high-tech powerhouse. With 45,000 kilometers of high-speed rail — the most of any country — you can travel from Beijing to Shanghai, a distance of 1,300 kilometers, in just four hours. 5G networks cover the country. BYD electric cars sell worldwide. Alipay and WeChat Pay handle

almost every daily transaction. TikTok started here as Douyin. Games like Genshin Impact and Honor of Kings have become global hits. China built its own space station, the Tiangong, successfully landed on the far side of the moon, and sent a rover to Mars.

And the food! There is so much more than American-style Chinese takeout. Eight major cuisines each have their own character: Sichuan's mouth-numbing hot pot, Guangdong's juicy soup dumplings, Xinjiang's fragrant lamb skewers with cumin, and Beijing's crispy-skinned roast duck. At night markets, stinky tofu smells awful but tastes amazing, grilled squid sizzles on the grill, and everyone walks around with a bubble tea in hand. During Spring Festival, fireworks light up the sky; during the Dragon Boat Festival, teams race dragon boats and eat sticky rice dumplings; during the Mid-Autumn Festival, families admire the full moon and share mooncakes. There are red envelopes, lantern festivals, and dragon dances — a celebration around every corner. Culturally, old and new mix together beautifully. Confucius taught kindness, righteousness, and the wisdom of the "Middle Way," influencing all of East Asia for thousands of years. Daoism encourages harmony with nature. Buddhism arrived from India long ago. Today, ancient temples stand beside gleaming skyscrapers. C-pop idols and pro-gaming teams win world championships. Young people in Shanghai and Shenzhen live surrounded by bubble tea delivery, shared bikes, and drone shipping. They study hard and compete fiercely, but they also know how to enjoy life. Fifty-six officially recognized ethnic groups make up China's population — the Han are the majority, while Tibetan temples, Mongolian horsemen, Uyghur dancers, and Zhuang water-splashing festivals add brilliant color. It's as diverse as America, but with roots that go even deeper.

China follows its own path — socialism with Chinese characteristics. From poverty and weakness, it has lifted 800 million people out of poverty. Today it pushes forward in artificial intelligence, green energy, and quantum computing. Challenges remain, yes. But the energy here is undeniable. To understand the twenty-first century, you need to understand China.

Part 2: Shandong Province — A Miniature China, Hometown of Confucius

Now zoom in on the map. Look at Shandong Province. It sits on China's eastern coast, where the Yellow River flows into the sea. The entire peninsula stretches out like a great eagle's wing, reaching into the Yellow Sea and the Bohai Sea. With a population of over 100 million — more than many countries — Shandong is often called "a China in miniature." Why? Because its terrain slopes from west to east, with Mount Tai as its backbone, much like China's own three-step geography. It blends the spirit of inland civilization with the openness of the ocean.

The saying "One Mountain, One River, One Sage" captures Shandong perfectly.

The mountain is Mount Tai — the most revered of China's Five Great Mountains and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Ancient emperors climbed its 7,000-plus steps to pray for peace and prosperity. Today, visitors make the same climb to watch the sunrise. As the clouds roll beneath you and golden light breaks over the peaks, there's something deeply healing about the journey.

The river is the Yellow River, where it meets the sea in a vast

wetland filled with red-crowned cranes and swans. The Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal cuts through the province — once the great highway of ancient trade, turning cities like Jining and Linqing into bustling hubs. And in the novel "Water Margin," 108 outlaw heroes gathered at Mount Liang to fight for justice — kind of like an ancient Chinese Avengers.



Economically, Shandong is known as "Lu the Mighty." It has all 41 major industrial categories and ranks among China's top three provinces in GDP year after year. Agriculture is just as impressive: the vegetables of Shouguang, the apples of Yantai, the garlic of Jinxiang — all number one in the country. And the seafood? Incredibly fresh.

The sage is Confucius, born in Qufu over 2,500 years ago. The "Three Kongs" of Qufu are the sacred sites of Confucianism. The Temple of Confucius is a magnificent complex where ceremonies honor his teachings — perfectly symmetrical, grand and peaceful. The Confucius Mansion is the sprawling home where his descendants lived for more than 2,000 years. And the Confucius Forest is the world's largest and oldest family cemetery, with over 100,000 graves scattered among ancient, towering trees. Walking through it feels like stepping into the spiritual heart of

Confucianism itself.

Shandong is also home to two brilliant cultural traditions. The Qi culture was open-minded and practical, producing great strategists like Guan Zhong and Sun Tzu (who wrote "The Art of War"), and clever stories like "Tian Ji's Horse Race." The Lu culture was steady and sincere, with Confucius as its greatest figure. That's why people from Shandong are known for being warm, down-to-earth, and capable — equally at home with books or with battle.

Jinan, the capital, is called the "City of Springs" — every household has gurgling springs and drooping willows. The Baotu Spring and Daming Lake are sights to behold. And the food? Shandong cuisine is honest and delicious — savory pancakes rolled with green onions, sweet-and-sour Yellow River carp, and braised meats that stick to your ribs.



Shandong is essentially China in a concentrated package: sacred mountains, a great sage, heroes, waterways, industry, and agriculture — everything you need. Visit Shandong, and you'll understand most of what China has to offer.

Part 3: Qingdao — Seaside City of Red Roofs and Green Trees

Finally, we arrive at Qingdao (pronounced "Ching-dow"). It sits on the southern coast of the Shandong Peninsula, embraced by the Yellow Sea. With an area of 11,000 square kilometers, 882 kilometers of coastline, and 120 small islands, Qingdao enjoys a mild climate — not too hot in summer, not too cold in winter. The scholar Kang Youwei once praised it: "Green hills and trees, neither cold nor hot, blue sea and azure sky — the best in all of China."

The city has a fascinating history. In 1898, Germany leased the area and built a large number of European-style buildings as well as the famous Tsingtao Brewery. Today, the old city is filled with German architecture, and you might feel like you've wandered into a European town. Badaguan (Eight Passes) is like a museum of international architecture — Russian, French, German, and Danish villas nestled among cherry blossoms in spring and ginkgo trees in gold in autumn. It is often called one of the most beautiful streetscapes in all of China.

The classic landmarks include the Zhanqiao Pier, which stretches out into the sea, where seagulls circle and waves lap against the shore. May Fourth Square features the dramatic red sculpture "Wind of May" — a symbol of energy and a memorial to the May Fourth Movement. The Olympic Sailing Center, built for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, is now dotted with white sails catching the sea breeze. Laoshan Mountain is known as the "Number One Mountain by the Sea" — a sacred Daoist site where legend says Emperor Qin Shi Huang once came searching for the elixir of

immortality. The Taiqing Temple, over a thousand years old, inspired the fox-spirit tales in "Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio." Climb the mountain and look out over the misty sea — it feels like walking through a painting. The beaches — Number One Bathing Beach, Golden Sand Beach — are perfect for swimming, beach volleyball, and grilled squid on summer days.



Qingdao is a food lover's paradise. Living by the sea means eating from the sea: spicy stir-fried clams, steamed abalone in its shell, sea cucumber with scallions, and mackerel dumplings — all incredibly fresh. On the streets, you'll see people carrying beer in plastic bags and snacking on seafood. The locals love to say, "Drink beer, eat clams!" The Qingdao International Beer Festival is Asia's biggest beer bash, lasting a whole month every summer. With lights, music, and food stalls everywhere, it's a giant summer party. (Don't worry — there are alcohol-free zones for young visitors too.)



Economically, Qingdao is a powerhouse. In 2025, its GDP exceeded 1.7 trillion yuan. Five famous companies — the "Five Golden Flowers" — bloom here: Haier (the world's top smart home appliance maker), Hisense (big-screen TVs), Tsingtao Beer, Double Star (footwear), and Aucma (appliances). New industries like artificial intelligence and biomedicine are growing fast. Qingdao Port is a world-class harbor, handling over 30 million shipping containers in 2024 and connecting to more than 180 countries. It's a key hub for trade between China, Japan, and Korea.



The city is very kid- and teen-friendly. Subways and shared bikes

make getting around easy. Shopping malls have arcades, karaoke rooms, and movie theaters. Night markets buzz with sizzling skewers. The university district pulses with youthful energy. The air is clean, and there are parks everywhere. You can go surfing, sailing, hiking in Laoshan, exploring old architecture, or visiting science exhibits — it's like the mountains-and-sea vibe of San Francisco mixed with the charm of an old European street, topped off with a futuristic Chinese energy.

An ideal day might go something like this: hike Laoshan in the morning, feast on seafood at noon, splash around at the beach in the afternoon, watch the sunset over Badaguan in the evening, then hit the night market for skewers. On weekends, there's the Beer Festival, or you can take a high-speed train to explore nearby cities. The city is safe, the people are friendly, and you'll even see English signs in many places.

Qingdao is what modern China looks like at its most livable: a history that never grows old, an ocean that stretches to the horizon, technology reaching upward — and a beer culture that keeps everyone grounded.

Bonus: China-US Latitude Comparison — Friends at the Same Latitude!

China and the United States (including Alaska) span roughly the same range of latitudes. But China faces the Pacific Ocean with its back to the Eurasian continent, while the US has oceans on both sides — so the climates are quite different.

Beijing (39.9°N) is at about the same latitude as Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia — both centers of politics and culture.

Shanghai (31.2°N) lines up closely with Houston and New

Orleans.

Guangzhou (23.1°N) is near Honolulu in latitude.

Harbin (45.8°N) sits around the same latitude as Minneapolis.

Shandong — and especially Qingdao (36.1°N) — shares a similar latitude with San Francisco, Sacramento, and Las Vegas. But Qingdao has more summer rain and colder winters, with four distinct seasons like the East Coast, moderated by the ocean. If you were to compare roles, Shandong is a bit like Pennsylvania — a cultural birthplace (Confucius versus the Declaration of Independence), with strong German influence (Qingdao's architecture versus Pennsylvania's German heritage), and a history of port cities. Qingdao itself blends the port-city character of Philadelphia, the laid-back seaside vibe of San Francisco, and the beer culture of Milwaukee.

In terms of distance, Qingdao to Houston is about 11,762 kilometers, with a 13-to-14-hour time difference. Qingdao to Las Vegas is a bit closer at about 10,151 kilometers, but the time difference is even greater. Same latitude, completely different worlds — and that's what makes it so fascinating.

From the Great Wall at sunrise to the cloud seas of Mount Tai, from the wisdom of Confucius to the intelligence of smart-home technology, from the misty magic of Laoshan to the joyful clinking of Tsingtao Beer glasses — this land is ancient and young, traditional and trendy all at once. Come to China. Come to Qingdao. In the "red roofs and green trees, blue sea and azure sky," you will find a kind of poetry in everyday life.

Why not learn a few words of Chinese? Ni hao (Hello). Xie xie (Thank you). Qingdao pijiu (Qingdao Beer).

Want to go on this adventure? Ask your family to plan a trip — or start by exploring on Google Earth. The journey begins the moment you decide to look.

Hu Shuang's Home

Let me now begin the first part of this book—about Hu Shuang's home. Hu Shuang's family has three people: her father and mother, of course. My name is Hu Ming, and her mother's name is Zhang Dongping. We're both native Qingdao locals.

Where is Qingdao? It belongs to Shandong Province, in the southeastern part of the province, a coastal city. Geographically, it's similar to Norfolk or Virginia Beach on the east coast of Virginia—about the same latitude. But Qingdao has a population of around ten million, much larger than Norfolk. Qingdao is the second-largest economic and cultural center of Shandong Province, an important central coastal city in China, and the leading city of the Shandong Peninsula Blue Economic Zone.

Hu Shuang's father and mother—Hu Ming and Zhang Dongping—were married on October 1, 1995, at ages 27 and 26, respectively. Our wedding home was a small apartment on the fifth floor at 85 Yichun Road. It was a studio unit, with a usable area of only about 23 square meters, though it did have a kitchen and bathroom. This apartment was compensation from Hu Shuang's Paternal Grandpa's school, based on his position. Back then, during China's planned economy era, different levels of teachers were allocated different amounts of living space. It happened that Paternal Grandpa was still short some square footage, so the school gave him this extra small studio, which he passed on to me for my marriage. My own company at the time also contributed some money as part of my benefits package. This was the most direct welfare I ever experienced during China's planned economy era.

This is where Hu Shuang was born. Her birth brought great joy to

both sides of the family, because she was the first child among all the siblings' children in both families. Her grandparents on both sides poured enormous warmth and affection into Hu Shuang, constantly checking in on her throughout her childhood, always careful to make sure she was happy.



Hu Shuang spent a happy childhood here. Every day coming home, she'd climb the two long flights of stairs behind the building, which led up to the rooftop of the shop below—over 200 square meters of open space. Before going home, or anytime really, she could roller skate or ride her bike up there. The apartment itself was small, so this rooftop made up for it.

Hu Shuang lived in this home for six years, from birth through her three years of kindergarten. In 2002, when Hu Shuang started elementary school, we decided that Maternal Grandpa should move in with us to help with picking her up and dropping her off. So we rented a slightly bigger place in Cuobuling Third District, just a hundred meters east of our old home. As I recall, Hu Shuang's mother and I shared one room, while Maternal Grandpa

and Hu Shuang shared the other. But Hu Shuang had her own bed—a metal-frame bed I'd built myself back when I worked at my old company.



When it came to taking Hu Shuang to and from kindergarten, I didn't do much of it—that was mostly her mother's job. We didn't have a car back then, so almost every workday, her mother would carry Hu Shuang onto the bus or a minibus, walk another 200 meters or so to drop her at kindergarten, and then head to the office. Pick-up was usually handled by Paternal Grandma, since she lived close to the kindergarten. By that time, Paternal Grandpa had already passed away, and Paternal Grandma was retired and at home, so taking on this task worked out well—it

was a huge help to us. After work, Hu Shuang's mother would go to Paternal Grandma's house to pick up Hu Shuang and carry her home, or take the bus. At work, it was generally understood that women could arrive late or leave early to pick up their kids—a small courtesy from the company.

I had just switched jobs at the end of 1998, moving from a state-owned factory to a Hong Kong-owned enterprise. I was in the thick of trying to prove myself and earn a promotion, so I wasn't very involved in the drop-off and pick-up routine. Before that new job, when Hu Shuang was first born, I was still working at a state-owned factory. Business wasn't good back then—neoprene rubber wasn't selling, inventory was piling up—and I was frequently on leave at home. So for the time before Hu Shuang started kindergarten, I was the one who stayed home with her most days. Looking back now, Hu Shuang's mother and I had staggered career peaks. When one of us was busy, the other was in a low period, so there was always someone to handle things at home. If we'd both been swamped, we would've needed Paternal Grandma or Maternal Grandma and Grandpa to step in.



Hu Shuang's kindergarten days were mostly happy, though she did have her unhappy moments. Those usually had to do with her relationship with the teachers. Her kindergarten had two main teachers, both surnamed Wang—one called Big Wang and the other Little Wang, though really they were both young women. One upsetting incident happened when Big Wang selected a few kids to learn electronic keyboard, and Hu Shuang wasn't chosen. She came home that evening looking down, and told her mother that she really wanted to play the keyboard too. Her mother's reaction was immediate: how could the teacher pick kids for keyboard lessons and not include her daughter? Without getting angry or upset, she drew on her experience and efficiency working in a government office. She figured out how to solve the problem that same evening and prepared thoroughly. Then she told Hu Shuang, "Don't worry, sweetie. Mom will talk to the teacher tomorrow and make sure you get to learn too." Sure enough, the next day she met with Big Wang and quietly handed over a small gift she'd prepared in advance. The problem was solved perfectly. The kindergarten, wanting to encourage Hu Shuang's enthusiasm for learning, added one more spot to the keyboard class—and Hu Shuang happily started learning.

But her mother didn't stop there. Instead of buying a cheap electronic keyboard, she skipped straight to an electric piano. An electronic keyboard is basically a toy—the sound quality and fingering technique are completely different from a real piano. Hu Shuang's mother was thinking long-term. Once her daughter started elementary school, she'd definitely be learning piano. Getting familiar with an electric piano beforehand would be the perfect warm-up and practice, whereas a toy keyboard wouldn't have helped at all.

So Hu Shuang practiced on the electronic keyboard at

kindergarten during the day, and came home to practice on the electric piano at night. Her interest in music gradually grew. Her mother had solved this problem brilliantly, and had set up a long-term plan for Hu Shuang's piano education—including future piano exams. Not long after, when we moved to a new home, we bought a real piano. Hu Shuang's elementary and middle school years were spent studying, practicing piano in her spare time, and going for piano exams. By the time she graduated from middle school, she had reached level ten in piano.



When Hu Shuang started elementary school, Paternal Grandma found someone to help look after her. Paternal Grandma had been a homeroom teacher at several elementary schools in Qingdao and knew the system inside and out. She had students everywhere—"plums and peaches fill the world," as the saying goes. When it was time to register Hu Shuang at Qingdao Normal School Affiliated Elementary, Paternal Grandma came along happily, chatting with the school staff and introducing her granddaughter. Naturally, the school paid extra attention. During

her time at that school, nothing really upset Hu Shuang. But I, her father, managed to stir up a bit of trouble.

It happened like this: when Hu Shuang entered second grade, the curriculum got more complicated and the homework load grew heavier. This is how it is in China—even kids in the lower grades of elementary school get thrown into a sea of practice problems. From time to time, the class would have in-class quizzes—"tests in place of drills," they called them. The teacher would grade them and hand them back. Then, besides doing that day's homework, the kids had to copy the test questions onto a fresh sheet of paper and answer them all over again, to reinforce their memory and make sure they wouldn't make the same mistakes twice. Doing the test again I could understand. But making them copy the whole thing by hand every single time seemed excessive. The kids already had homework that kept them up late. To help Hu Shuang finish faster, either her mother or I would copy the test for her—transcribing it onto a blank sheet the same size as the original, usually a big sheet with questions on both sides.

One day it was my turn to copy. The more I copied, the more I felt the teacher was just torturing the kids and making parents do pointless busywork. I thought about how I wouldn't put up with this kind of nonsense at my own job, and I picked up the phone and called Hu Shuang's homeroom teacher, Teacher Chi, to vent. She calmed me down and explained that the school couldn't afford to photocopy tests every time—the workload was too heavy—and so on.

I thought that was the end of it. But then, something unexpected happened. A day later, Hu Shuang came home and said the teacher had removed her as team leader and given the role to another student. The official reason was that Hu Shuang was under too much academic pressure and should focus on her

studies instead of serving her classmates. Her mother said to me, "See what you've done? You complained to the teacher and made your little 'suggestions,' and all it did was embarrass the homeroom teacher and the school. Now your daughter's been demoted from team leader—and you can't even say a word about it. You have to thank the teacher for being so 'considerate' of your child's study pressure."

In the end, it was Hu Shuang's mother who fixed things and made sure Hu Shuang didn't suffer any worse consequences. Teacher Chi was a woman, so Hu Shuang's mother found time to speak with her privately, apologized on my behalf, and patched things up. After that, I kept my mouth shut. When it came to handling things outside the home, Hu Shuang's mother definitely had the better approach.

After Paternal Grandpa passed away, Paternal Grandma kept going to her church gatherings and serving there. By then, Hu Shuang was in elementary school near Paternal Grandma's house, so Paternal Grandma helped pick her up after school. On April 15, 2003, Dongping went to Paternal Grandma's house after work to pick up Hu Shuang, and on her own initiative asked her mother-in-law—who was already a believer—if she could also put her faith in the Lord. Dongping became a believer that day. She came to God to find healing, and she took her faith seriously. Whenever the church had a gathering, she went, without anyone needing to push her. Under pressure from both Dongping and Paternal Grandma, I also started going to church. I made the decision to believe in the Lord on May 26. We spent eight years in that traditional, conservative house church.

Back then, the church's meeting locations weren't fixed. Sometimes we gathered at one member's home, then a while later we'd move to another member's home, because occasionally

neighbors would complain—about the noise from hymn singing or the disruption of large groups of people coming and going through the neighborhood. Eventually, the church's main meeting point ran into trouble with the authorities, and the church urgently needed a larger, safer place to gather. The pastor and church workers came to our home and asked if we'd be willing to host the gatherings. At that time, my wife and I were still weak in our faith, with limited spiritual maturity. But in that moment of crisis, I agreed and opened our home to the church. Later, because Dongping couldn't accept the pastor's attitude toward marriage, we decided to leave that church. Our family came under serious attack from the church, and there was a lot of mutual misunderstanding and hurtful behavior. But that's a story for later.

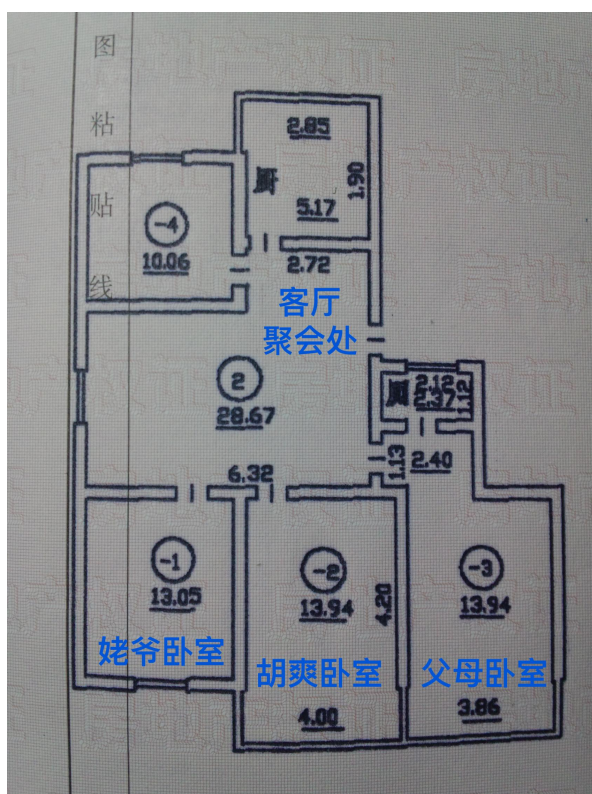
During that time, Hu Shuang's mother was burning with passion for the Lord. That summer, she and Paternal Grandma braved the scorching heat and went all over town looking at houses. Eventually, they found one they liked on the east side of Building 147 on Hong Kong Middle Road—a place that met the church's needs. I took over from there, contacting the real estate agent and trying to reach the owner to make a purchase. Unfortunately, the owner lived in another city and couldn't come back to discuss the details. But we really loved the layout of that building. The apartments on both the east and west ends were spacious three-bedroom units, with all the bedrooms facing south. And the building itself was standalone—not part of any neighborhood or housing complex—so it was quiet and private, good for gatherings.

So I printed up my own buy-request flyers and posted them in every hallway and stairwell, hoping to find a potential seller. My persistence paid off. A family in the west-side unit contacted me.

They had inherited the apartment from their parents and bought a new place in eastern Qingdao, so they wanted to sell without going through an agent—which was exactly what I had in mind. The deal went through quickly, and we got the home we'd been hoping for.

We moved from Cuobuling No. 2 Road to Building 147 on Hong Kong Middle Road around September 2003. As I mentioned, the best thing about this three-bedroom apartment was that all three bedrooms faced south. Looking at the building, the left side is actually the west side. There's one window on that side for the living room. On the north side are the kitchen and bathroom. The three south-facing bedrooms run from west to east: Hu Shuang's Maternal Grandpa's room, Hu Shuang's room, and her parents' room. Outside the windows are air-conditioning units. The building sits right on the street, so there's some traffic noise, but the windows have double-layer soundproof glass, and being on the fifth floor helps too.





In the living room, we had a sofa and a dining table. Every Sunday morning, we'd rearrange things to accommodate group gatherings. Everyone was quiet during the meetings, trying not to make much noise or bother the neighbors. Our neighbor across the hall was a middle-aged man who ran a restaurant in Qingdao, so he was rarely home during the day and came back very late at night—we hardly ever disturbed him. The neighbor downstairs once asked me if we were having meetings, but said he didn't mind. There weren't many residents in the building normally, and everyone was fairly polite. Our home served as a hosting place for the church for eight years, until the church finally rented a larger space. During all that time, things were peaceful, no one bothered us—it was a blessed place.

Starting from elementary school, Hu Shuang's Maternal Grandpa also helped with the school drop-off and pick-up routine. It was hard work, and we were grateful for it. Over time, I, as the son-in-law, built a deep bond with my father-in-law. Maternal Grandpa became an indispensable part of our household. Hu Shuang's mother's older sister and younger sister and their families also came over for holiday dinners from time to time, and the three sisters' families grew closer.

If there's anything I regret—and this is something both Hu Shuang's mother and I feel—it's this: from the time we first believed, through our fervent service, to actively hosting the church in our home and giving generously of our resources, we were so busy with religious activity that we almost never took time to think about what it really means to live out one's faith. Especially in China, where the environment isn't very supportive of Christianity. And on top of that, both of us were Communist Party members and key professionals in our respective workplaces. How to practice Christian faith in this context was a serious question, not just for us but for many believers in similar situations. Faith, in our lives, was an option, not a necessity. We had to choose between job responsibilities and personal faith; we couldn't seamlessly integrate the two. It wasn't until we both gradually stepped away from the constraints of our careers that faith moved to the forefront. It wasn't that we didn't understand what was right—it was that the environment constrained and pressured us, forcing us to go along. And that long-term compromise kept our hearts in conflict, to the point where it clouded our judgment and reduced our daily service to mere formality. I wrote many articles on my personal blog, Husir.org, reflecting on all of this. Not for any grand purpose—just to live a life where my inner self and outer actions are aligned, where my

words and deeds match.

As I said earlier, during elementary and middle school, Hu Shuang's Maternal Grandpa handled the daily drop-offs and pick-ups. But on weekends, it was my job to drive her to all kinds of extracurricular classes and tutoring sessions. And I treasured those times. While waiting for Hu Shuang's class to finish, I had time to observe the surroundings and think about my own life. Even more, I got to spend time with my daughter—eating together, taking walks together, talking through the problems she was facing. The truth is, I was a young man with no real experience in marriage. When a child suddenly appeared in our lives, the anxiety and bewilderment I felt were things I couldn't share with anyone. I had to learn slowly, bit by bit, through all these small moments of daily life. What we hadn't anticipated was that this child was growing and improving every single day, and her maturity of thought was outstripping our expectations.

Hu Shuang made the decision to study abroad in 2012. The whole family was surprisingly united on this—finally, we were all facing the same question together. But even facing the same question, each of us had a different way of dealing with it. During Hu Shuang's first semester abroad, faced with unfamiliar surroundings and the struggle to find her footing, we as parents could only guess at what she was going through, based on our own past experiences. We didn't have a ready-made answer. It wasn't until Hu Shuang recommended a book to me that her mother and I finally found a shared understanding.

I remember it was an afternoon. I was driving home from Taidong, just going down the ramp near the immigration office, when Hu Shuang sent me a message recommending a book she'd read: **The Road Less Traveled**, Volume One, by M. Scott Peck. When I got home, I found the book, read it, and had an epiphany.

The problems that everyone in a family faces can't really be solved by some ready-made formula passed down from others. What it takes is building the habits of independence, self-discipline, and proactive learning in each person. Face your problems. Face yourself. There's no difficulty that can't be overcome. The difficulties that seem insurmountable are actually reminders that you're lacking the courage to confront them. Just go ahead and do it. No one can hold you back—except yourself.

Hu Shuang's mother and I both read that book. We talked about it with each other, and we talked about it with our daughter. The conclusion we reached was that none of us—father, mother, or Hu Shuang—could ever stop pushing ourselves to learn and grow. Each of us had to keep refueling ourselves on the path of self-improvement. And what that meant, especially for parents, was that our main job wasn't to lecture our children—it was to keep improving ourselves and set an example through our own actions. The road less traveled is, in the end, a road that each person must walk alone—a solid, genuine path through life. In the two years after that, I bought over fifty copies of that book online and gave them to friends on various occasions, hoping they too could break free from the old pattern of just lecturing their kids and become true role models instead.

Hu Shuang turned out to be far more remarkable than we could have imagined. After all, her mother and I only had the experience of living and studying in China. But Hu Shuang, with her own courage, felt her way forward step by step, completed high school and college on her own, faced nearly every problem that came up along the way, and overcame it. She truly had the same guts and wisdom that her grandparents showed when they first came to Qingdao to make a life. Her mother and I joked about it many times: we can't match her grandparents, and we can't

match Hu Shuang either. We've just stayed in Qingdao, followed the routine, worked within the system, relied on the system—kind of stagnant, really. But every generation has its own strengths and limitations. Even if our jobs tied us to the system, it never stopped us from taking Hu Shuang on trips. Her mother and I took her all over Shandong Province, to Beijing, Shanghai, Jiuzhaigou—and abroad to Israel and Hong Kong as well.





Hu Shuang's Family Background

Hu Shuang's Father and Mother

Hu Shuang's Mother

Zhang Dongping, Hu Shuang's mother, was born on June 15, 1969 (the first day of the fifth lunar month in the Year of the Rooster). From her father's perspective, this is her story.

She was born into a military family in Qingdao. Her father, Zhang Jing'an, was a former soldier originally from Rugao, Jiangsu Province — a man of the south. Her mother, Wang Huarong, worked at the Number Five Printing and Dyeing Factory in Qingdao and was originally from Wendeng, Shandong Province — a woman of the north. There were three sisters in the family, and Zhang Dongping was the middle child. Both parents were very busy, especially her father, who lived on the military base and was often away from home. Her mother had to manage both work and the household, carrying most of the family's weight on her shoulders. In February 1968, her mother gave birth to her older sister, Zhang Chunhong. Then, one year and four months later, Dongping was born. Her paternal grandparents, influenced by traditional thinking, had always hoped for a boy — but it was not to be. When Dongping was nearly five, in February 1974, her mother gave birth to her younger sister, Zhang Ruwei.

The Hardship of Raising Children

After Dongping was born, her maternal grandmother came to Qingdao to help her mother through the postpartum confinement period, and then took the older sister back to the countryside in Yantai to raise her. The older sister didn't return to Qingdao until she was six and a half (August 1974). The younger sister was also sent to the Yantai countryside when she was just over a year old, and came back at three and a half (August 1977). Because Dongping was sickly and weak as a child, her parents didn't send her to the countryside. Though her parents had hoped for a son, that never diminished their love for their daughters. Her mother especially — she was a fiercely capable woman, hardworking and diligent. The girls had better food and clothing than the other children around them; they were neat, well-mannered, and polite. Her mother gave everything to the family, sacrificing herself completely.

Misaligned Parental Roles

In Dongping's memory, her father was always busy. The military base was far from home, so he could only come back once a week — sometimes once every half month or even once a month. He was an easygoing, good-natured man, but whenever problems arose, he would shrink back. His favorite saying was "Trust the organization, trust the Party." He never fought for anything, and this passive nature caused her mother a great deal of hardship in matters concerning the military base and family relations. Her mother, by contrast, was strong, loving, and responsible, with good relationships wherever she went. She seemed to live her whole life for the family, for others, often forgetting herself. In Dongping's eyes, her father did not stand tall — her mother did.

Parental Favoritism

After her younger sister returned from Yantai, Dongping began to notice that the best things in the house always went to her

sister first. The younger sister had privileges in everything. Their parents always told them: "The older sister must give in to the younger one, because she's still little." As the years passed, the younger sister grew up beautiful, clever, and well-behaved. She excelled at school — good grades, good at sports, good at the arts — and brought great pride to their parents.

The Ugly Duckling's Helplessness

Dongping and her older sister were only about a year apart. Their clothes were always similar in style, just different in color, collar, or cut. As a child, Dongping was dark-skinned and plain. Relatives would always praise her older sister for being cute. When her mother chose clothes for them, Dongping could never get what she wanted. One year, her mother bought two sets of export-quality clothes — one red, one green. Dongping wanted the red one, but her mother insisted the green one looked better on her. Her older sister wore the red outfit and drew compliments wherever she went. Another time, her mother made two dresses: a round-collared "baby doll" style and a square-collared "Lenin suit." The round-collared dress went to the older sister, while Dongping was coaxed into wearing the square-collared one. She was unhappy about it, but said nothing.

By now the reader can probably see what was happening. Without consciously realizing it, Dongping's mother was treating her like a boy.

Raised as a Boy

Dongping was taller than her sister, and the family had no son. When she entered middle school, her mother started dressing her in small-sized military uniforms. This was the early 1980s, just after the Cultural Revolution, when military uniforms were all the rage. Her classmates envied her — some boys even asked her for a uniform. She got along well with the boys, and during

extracurricular activities they treated her as one of them. Bit by bit, her personality became more boyish. Even her name — Zhang Dongping — sounded like a boy's name. She didn't like it.

The truth is, the way parents see and treat their children often carries deep bias. These views create distortions in a child's psyche, and the hidden wounds surface years later.

A Lifelong Regret

All three sisters were class monitors in elementary school. In middle school, Dongping and her older sister did well academically. But in high school (around 1985), they hit a wall and didn't know how to push through. Just then, their maternal grandmother was diagnosed with cancer. Dongping's mother — the most devoted and capable of her own mother's children — poured all her energy into caring for her. She missed the critical window for her two older daughters. From the grandmother's diagnosis to her death, about three years passed — exactly the girls' high school years. They were adolescents, confused and helpless, unable to find their way through academic difficulties. In the end, neither she nor her older sister passed the college entrance exam — a lifelong regret. Thankfully, the youngest sister eventually got into university, bringing some comfort to their parents. Later, after marriage, Dongping earned her bachelor's degree through part-time study.

Starting Work

As expected, when Dongping graduated from high school in 1987, she did not get into university. Her parents contacted her aunt and arranged for her to repeat a year at Mouping Number One High School in Yantai. She took the college entrance exam again in 1988 and failed again. By then I was already a university freshman. Dongping's mother — who would later become my mother-in-law — had taken a liking to me when I came to pay

New Year's respects during my senior year of high school. She was cool toward the other boys who came, but gave me tacit approval to keep seeing her daughter. So we continued our relationship, slowly. During Dongping's repeat year in Yantai, we could only write letters. Not too many letters though — it wasn't the time for romance.

When Dongping returned to Qingdao, her father — my future father-in-law — quickly found her a job as a sales clerk at the newly opened Donghai Department Store in May 1989. She was twenty years old. The Donghai Department Store was a white five-story building at the southeast corner of Anshan Road and Zhenjiang Road, each floor over a thousand square meters. It was a novel concept for the time. Qingdao had several major department stores operating on traditional models, but Donghai was different — open-concept counters, the city's first escalator, a wide variety of merchandise, and young, attractive sales staff. Everything about it radiated modernity. Customers poured in from all over the city. Dongping formed close bonds with a group of young coworkers; it was the first time in her life she'd known so many friends. The service staff were all young, and I got plenty of special treatment through her — discounted pastries, sausages, Tsingtao beer from different counters.

I came to know a few of her close friends from that time. I can't remember all their names, but the one she kept in touch with most was Song Tao. Song Tao was about Dongping's age and stayed in touch through the years. When we needed to buy furniture, we usually asked her for help. But during Dongping's illness — those final years until she passed — Song Tao happened to be going through her own health struggles starting in 2019, and they lost touch for over a year. Dongping talked about Song Tao more than anyone else, but her illness prevented her from

reaching out. Two good friends, missing each other.

Dongping worked at Donghai Department Store for exactly one year. In June 1990, when she was twenty-one, her father arranged through a contact for her to transfer to the Qingdao Electric Motor Factory. It was a modest little factory, founded in 1980, run by a director named Liu Duxian. Its original address was Number 472, West Wujiacun, Sifang District — on the north bank of the Haipo River. To be precise: take the small road Xiwu Number One Road southeast of Qingdao Haici Hospital, walk about two hundred meters south until you reach Qingdao Number Twenty Middle School (now the Qingdao Vocational School of Economics), then go another hundred meters or so — that was the factory's location. It's now the Aohuayuan residential community.

Though she hadn't gotten into university, she scored the highest among all applicants on the factory entrance exam and joined Qingdao Electric Motor Factory as the top recruit. She participated in poetry readings, speech competitions, and calligraphy contests organized by the factory. She represented the factory in the Qingdao Machinery Bureau's speech competition and won first prize. She quickly distinguished herself. During a factory Youth League Congress election, she came in third. The first- and second-place winners were both technical experts who didn't want to do Youth League work, so the Party secretary called her in for a talk. She was torn — she was studying statistics in the supply department at the time, and her department head encouraged her to take the opportunity. So at twenty-one, she became the factory's Youth League secretary.

After taking the position, she centered her work on the factory's economic goals, coordinating with the Party to organize young workers in various activities: technical competitions,

energy-saving campaigns, cultural and sports events. All were recognized and affirmed by leadership at every level. During a cultural performance organized by the Machinery Bureau's Youth League Committee, she put together a young fashion model troupe that caused a sensation across the entire bureau, bringing great honor to the factory. From then on, factory leadership strongly supported Youth League work. Later, the municipal Youth League Committee selected outstanding Youth League cadres to study at the Central Youth League School in Beijing, and Dongping was fortunate enough to attend. After returning, she was seconded to the bureau office to help out, and eventually stayed on as a permanent staff member.

A Wife to Be Admired

Dongping and I were high school classmates at Qingdao Number Sixteen High School. She attended from seventh grade all the way through twelfth grade at Number Sixteen, while I was only there for high school. Though I was class monitor, we barely spoke during those three years. I knew she and two other girls were part of a closer circle of boys in the class — her little group. As the class monitor, I tried to stay neutral and didn't belong to any group. Dongping was more extroverted in those days, while I was more introverted. Our social circles were completely different. After graduation, when curious classmates found out we'd gotten together, they were astonished — especially the members of her little group.

In the summer of 1987, I was admitted to university. She admired me for it, and in turn, her optimistic, confident personality drew me in. Our differences actually brought us closer. Our courtship went smoothly — it was God's arrangement. She was lively and good-natured, a favorite among the teachers. I was the good class monitor in everyone's eyes, a good companion to the boys. In

those days, classmates who received university admission letters would run to tell everyone the news. Her mother had met some of the boys from our class who'd gotten in. But when I went to their house to share my good news, the moment her mother saw me, she liked me.

After we started dating, her mother sometimes treated me better than she treated her own daughter. And I treated her mother well too. From time to time, she would visit me at Qingdao Chemical Engineering Institute, where I was studying, bringing nourishing food and even pocket money. As I mentioned earlier, her mother had always wanted a son. My appearance seemed to fill that space — our relationship was almost more like mother and son. Eight years of courtship led naturally to marriage. On October 1, 1995, National Day, we walked down the aisle.

The Loss of Loved Ones Dealt Her Crushing Blows

My father was a vice-principal at a middle school. When Dongping came to our house for meals during our dating years, my father would talk to us about the meaning of life and the principles of being a good person. My brother and I didn't really listen, but Dongping was captivated. She later said her own father had never taught her these things — she gained a lot from it, a kind of compensation for the fatherly guidance she had missed.

When Dongping was seconded to the bureau office, her official personnel file was still with the factory (Qingdao Electric Motor Factory). She had planned to officially transfer her file into the bureau before getting married. But then my father fell seriously ill, and we rushed to get married. There is an old Chinese saying that a child's wedding can bring good luck to an elderly family member who is sick. The next year, our daughter was born. My father met his granddaughter. When our daughter was one year and three months old, my father passed away. We have photos of

Grandpa holding Hu Shuang. They ate together during holidays. When Hu Shuang could walk, she would visit her grandparents. I remember one time in 1997, Grandpa needed his glasses and asked Hu Shuang to fetch them from the other room. She toddled over, brought them back, and handed them to him — that wobbly walk is still etched in my mind.



Another blow followed soon after. When our daughter was five and a half months old, Dongping's mother was diagnosed with cancer and had surgery. Two years later, it metastasized. When our daughter was four years and ten months old, her mother passed away (April 2001). Dongping was incredibly close to her mother. Her mother had been the family's spiritual pillar. After she was gone, Dongping completely collapsed. She closed herself off, stopped communicating, felt as though God was punishing their family. She cried out that God was unfair to take away two such outstanding parents from our family... Perhaps even God needed hardworking people.



Hard Work at the Machinery Bureau

From January 1998 to September 2003, Dongping worked under Director Ding Jianhua doing comprehensive statistical work. From September 2003 (age 34) to April 2005, she served as a trade union officer, then as trade union cashier. Around the later part of her statistical work, with the help of her younger sister and brother-in-law, she began attending night classes at Qingdao University of Technology and earned her bachelor's degree in accounting in July 2005 (age 36). In April 2006, leveraging her experience as a trade union cashier and her new degree, she was recruited by Director Yan of the Finance Department (a woman) and transferred there as a cashier, a position she held until October 2007.

Dongping had beautiful handwriting since her school days — for a girl, her writing had rhythm, sharp angles, and perfect

alignment, especially when she worked as a cashier. Her delicate hand-lettering drew praise from everyone who saw it. As a side note, Dongping could write very small and still make it graceful. When she wrote larger, her handwriting bore some resemblance to my father's. But Dongping's writing made people think of "the elegant quality of a refined young woman." I used to tease her: "Why do you put so much effort into writing a single character? Even writing the character for 'one' takes several turns for you. I just draw one stroke — more strokes for more complex characters. So simple." Later I realized that Dongping's meticulous way of writing reflected her way of thinking — she considered every angle, every detail, every factor.

Her writing was a reflection of who she was. Her solid work made a deep impression on successive bureau and department leaders. In October 2007, at age thirty-eight, Dongping was transferred to the bureau office as an office clerk. The work there demanded even greater precision, and required the ability to grasp the broader political and municipal context. The pressure this platform placed on Dongping was immense.

From the time Dongping and I got married until Hu Shuang started elementary school, we lived on Yichun Road. The Machinery Bureau was at Number 37 Hunan Road, a small building at the northwest corner of the intersection of Zhongshan Road and Hunan Road. To the north was Parkson Mall, to the south was Fada Shopping Center — shopping couldn't have been more convenient, not to mention all the sights and shops along Zhongshan Road. Dongping cherished both her work and the surroundings there, even though the commute was long. She worked successively in the bureau's statistics department, trade union, finance department, and office, earning praise at every post. Between work, she'd explore the neighborhood's food with

colleagues and leaders, and whenever she could steal a moment, she'd buy school supplies and clothes for Hu Shuang. For a working woman, stealing time to do something for her child and family was the greatest joy. In April 2003, the building was demolished for urban redevelopment, and the Machinery Bureau moved to the fifth floor of Number 10 Fuzhou North Road. In April 2011, per the municipal government's asset allocations, the Machinery Industrial Corporation was placed under the Qingdao Huatong Group.

Dongping worked in the statistics department the longest — about five years and eight months. She dealt directly with the Qingdao Municipal Statistics Bureau. Her main responsibility was compiling, organizing, analyzing, and uploading operational data from more than twenty entities within the city's machinery industry. Dongping was a meticulous person, so her statistical work was rock solid. She coordinated well with Wu Hongwen, the person in charge of this business at the Statistics Bureau. Data work in a government bureau isn't just about adding numbers — it has to express the momentum and potential of an entire industry. Every piece of data had to withstand the scrutiny and approval of leadership at every level. Dongping had the keen insight to grasp this early on, and her reports and analyses earned high praise from Director Wu at the Statistics Bureau, and from Bureau Director Chen and Department Director Ding Jianhua.

Later, because of her solid performance, she worked in other departments within the Machinery Bureau, under Director Yan of Finance (a woman), the Trade Union Chairman (I've forgotten his name), and Director Sun Mingming of the Office. The characteristic that defined Dongping's work was her extreme conscientiousness. To put it in today's terms: though her formal education wasn't high, her work ethic, attention to detail, and

emotional intelligence were outstanding. The most crucial thing — and the thing that cost Dongping the most — was her ability to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics with perfect precision: neither humble nor arrogant, knowing when to push and when to pull back. This was probably something she absorbed from her parents, and these qualities were essential for surviving in a government bureau office. Two older women in the office, Liu Yanni and Li Mingxia, helped Dongping enormously. The three of them would get together to eat at Red Chili Tangji Clear-Water Fish on Number 31 Baoding Road, a tradition that continued for over a decade. That restaurant was also where Dongping and I often went to satisfy our cravings.

I mentioned Dongping's education earlier — she ultimately earned an adult higher education bachelor's degree in accounting from Qingdao University of Technology in 2005. This was largely thanks to her younger sister Zhang Ruwei's husband, Xu Kefeng, a professor of architecture at the same university. With his help, she completed the degree, which proved crucial to her career.

Overworked to Exhaustion

As I said above, Dongping's work at the Machinery Industrial Corporation was mentally grueling. From roughly 1998 (age 29) when she entered the bureau, until her early retirement in 2013, there was one relocation — from Zhongshan Road to Number 99 Fuzhou Road, just north of the Broadcast Television Building. Thirteen years of this work wore Dongping down completely. To fit in at the bureau, she studied tirelessly in her spare time, earning the title of "Political Worker" on October 30, 2009, in addition to her accounting degree.

What finally brought Dongping down happened by accident but was entirely predictable. I think it was October 2010. She was preparing a speech for the bureau director to deliver at a city

government meeting. The entire office was working on it, and the speech went through more than ten revisions. Everyone was exhausted. One day I went to her office and found her photocopying materials for the meeting — each document, each page, laid out in perfect order. I teased her: "Do you really have to be this meticulous? Good enough is fine." But she didn't dare cut corners. She kept arranging the documents neatly.

I don't remember exactly how many days passed, but one night she didn't eat well at dinner, and the next morning she skipped breakfast. The office was still in chaos over the director's speech. It wasn't just Dongping — the endless revisions had worn everyone down. On top of that, Dongping was struggling with depression. Yes, by then she was already showing signs of depressive tendencies. So after another morning of frantic work, she finally collapsed in the hallway on her way to the restroom. Her colleagues called me immediately. I rushed over, and together we took her to the emergency room at Qingdao Eastern Municipal Hospital. The tests revealed chronic atrophic gastritis, along with weakness caused by nervous tension and low blood sugar — that's what caused the fainting. She was hospitalized for a few days, gradually regained her strength, and went home to rest.

After that, between the pressure of office politics at the bureau and her constant fear of being criticized for not doing her job well enough, she was giving too much, pushing too hard. Every day her nerves were stretched tight — she had to keep her eyes and ears open in every direction. Working in the core department meant constantly gauging the shifting terrain of leadership relationships. She was utterly drained. Eventually, Dongping and I agreed: after her discharge, she wouldn't go back to work. Health comes first. So she began taking medical leave.

Medical Leave and Early Retirement

The rest fell to me — I had to keep requesting leave for her. Each doctor's note was valid for only two weeks, so I had to go to the hospital every two weeks without fail, get a new note, fill out the leave application according to the bureau's template, and deliver it to her office. Getting medical leave from the Eastern Municipal Hospital was inconvenient, so we found Doctor Yang Jun, who had performed Dongping's previous hemorrhoid surgery. He worked at the Shibe District Hospital at Number 68 Taishan Road. Doctor Yang was young and easygoing. When we explained the situation, he agreed to help. Dongping needed regular medication for her gastrointestinal issues anyway, so I would go to Doctor Yang on her behalf, get her prescriptions and sick notes. Everything was above board. During this period, Dongping actively shifted her mindset, focused on recuperating, and worked on her mental state. This went on for about two years, until May 9, 2013 (she was 44) — her last day of medical leave.

On April 11, 2013, Sun Mingming, the office director at the bureau, asked to meet with me. Acting on leadership's instructions, he said it must be exhausting for me to keep applying for leave every two weeks. Since it seemed Dongping wouldn't be able to return to work, why not apply for early retirement and sign an agreement? I thought it was a good idea. After discussing it with Dongping, we signed the agreement. The agreement was signed on May 23, stipulating that internal early retirement would begin on June 1, 2013, and continue until her legal retirement age. Her salary would be 80% of Qingdao's minimum living standard, but social insurance contributions would continue. I went with Dongping to sign it. By then the Machinery Bureau had been placed under Qingdao Huatong Group, but none of that mattered to us anymore — at least we

wouldn't have to keep asking for leave. It was a relief. From that point until Dongping officially retired in 2019 (age 50), about six years passed. After the internal early retirement, her personnel file was transferred to the Huatong Enterprise Trusteeship Center at Number 52 Lianyungang Road. I handled all the subsequent retirement procedures there.

Love Is Easy, Marriage Is Hard

Marriage is the destination of beautiful love. To go from courtship to marriage — it's what everyone dreams of. We (Hu Shuang's parents) dated for eight years; we had a foundation. But after the devastating losses that struck our family, Dongping's heart carried an unbearable weight. The once optimistic, confident woman grew depressed and withdrawn. She couldn't emerge from that darkness for years, and it directly affected our marriage. She longed for me to understand her, comfort her, hold her. At first, I could push aside my own grief and accept her emotions. But as time went on, I couldn't take it anymore. We argued. We gave each other the silent treatment. I drank. I threw myself into work. I found every excuse to escape the house. She poured her energy into caring for our child and her job. We became strangers living under the same roof. There was no warmth in our home.

Then things began to turn around in our respective careers. Around 2001, I started getting promoted, and Dongping earned many honors at the ministerial, provincial, and municipal levels. Our daughter grew up day by day. We both worked hard to maintain our marriage. On the surface, we looked happy. But she wasn't happy inside. She started reading books about marriage: *Ten Foundations of a Happy Family*, *The Bible of a Happy Marriage*, *The Secret of Love*, *The Covenant*, *The Wife the Glorious Helper*. She attended marriage seminars: *The Journey of*

Intimacy, The True Meaning of Family Life. She held herself to the highest moral standards, but still couldn't find happiness. By chance, she began to encounter psychology and became interested in becoming a counselor.

She started learning. From those first encounters with psychological knowledge, she found the subject deeply practical. Through study, she came to understand the origins of the difficulties and pain she had experienced in her own growth. She learned to reinterpret the loneliness and helplessness she had felt when no one understood her. One by one, the knots began to loosen. She found answers to many questions. She shared her learning and insights with me, and our relationship slowly, gradually got better. I too became more interested in psychological issues. She tried to use her knowledge to understand the psychological changes her father-in-law and her own mother had gone through in their final days.

Some reports suggest that every healthy person carries potentially cancerous cells in their body — some people develop the disease, while others' bodies keep it under control. For the vast majority of cancer patients, changes in mental state and psychology are critical to the progression of the disease. This is inseparable from mental health and psychological adjustment.

As competitive pressures in society increase and the pace of life accelerates, many people feel confused and troubled. Dongping believed that counselors could help relieve or adjust these psychological problems and conflicts. It's a profession that helps others while helping oneself — both sides benefit. It was what she had been searching for all those years. It was the career she truly wanted.

Through her studies, she came to understand the personal qualities a qualified counselor should possess: kindness,

optimism, sincerity, warmth, independence, approachability, a cooperative spirit, a positive attitude toward life, and the ability to evaluate oneself accurately. In daily life, she worked to maintain a peaceful disposition, to control and regulate her emotions, and to sustain good relationships.

She began using what she learned in psychology to regulate herself. She found ways to release stress: listening to music, exercising. When she encountered psychological difficulties she couldn't resolve on her own, she sought help from supervisors. Wanting to improve her mental state was the right direction. In my view, if I could just take Dongping on trips, change her environment, help her escape the tense, twisted psychological torment of working within the system, she could gradually return to normal life. But Dongping went further than I'd imagined. From the time she started medical leave, she began studying psychology in earnest. I remember she studied at Room 338, Liangji Hotel at Number 33 Fuxin Road, south of the little village on Renmin Road, and upstairs at Number 116 Taidong Number One Road. I drove her to all these places. On September 1, 2013, she went to study at the Fulaigong Hot Spring Resort in Beijing — this time with other classmates from Qingdao, without me. The school on Renmin Road was the Sifang Hui Zhi Yuan Psychological Service Center, run by Ge Yuan, who had been practicing and teaching psychology for years. Dongping stayed in close touch with her and benefited greatly.

Through persistent effort, Dongping passed both the Level 3 and Level 2 national counselor exams, and on March 10, 2015, she received her national "Level 2 Psychological Counselor" professional qualification certificate.

Now, a question: did learning psychology help Dongping's physical and mental recovery? The answer is yes. The process

was hard, but also full of the joy of discovery. She could more or less connect what she learned to her own psychological condition and make comparisons. But whether it was truly beneficial — I think only she could fully appreciate that after completing the program. I say this as an outside observer. My sense is that after studying psychology, Dongping gained a theoretical understanding of her own psychological wounds and hardships. She took another major step forward on the road to recovery. In my assessment, at most 20% of her psychological problems and depressive state over those years were self-inflicted. At least 60% came from my father-in-law and mother-in-law — more from her mother's side. The remaining 20% came from our shared lack of insight, or more precisely, from a shallow understanding of faith and insufficient repentance for sin.

So yes, Dongping's study of psychology helped her recognize her own shortcomings and grow somewhat. But the wounds of the original family — those are things no one can easily transform into blessings by their own efforts in a single lifetime. Dongping was no exception. The worldview and values instilled from childhood, the family dynamics one grows up in — no one can fully escape these chains. Fortunately, Dongping and I both recognized this. Given the emotional fragility of every person, very few people can truly and completely break free from the influence of their original family members' every move and emotional interaction. Most would rather cling to those feelings than let them go to achieve spiritual growth.

From this perspective, human beings also need to worship God. Reverence for the Most High allows us to put everything else in perspective. After Dongping distanced herself from her workplace, her physical and emotional recovery was relatively good. At its root, the role of our church was crucial.

Personal Adjustment

From the time Dongping went on medical leave from the Machinery Bureau, through her internal early retirement, and up to her formal retirement — nearly ten years — she was never idle. As I mentioned, the Machinery Bureau was a place that consumed tremendous mental energy. She was far more depressed there than at Donghai Department Store. And she was competitive, which meant she felt oppressed everywhere in her actual work. Yet her faith principles prevented her from throwing herself into the cesspool of complex relationships. This contradiction — being neither fully accepted nor willing to abandon her integrity — was the root of her depression.

The outcome was inevitable. Dongping and I discussed the conflict between her work and her faith many times, and we both came to accept it. From April 15, 2003 (age 34), when she received the love of Christ that my mother shared with her, she drew a sharp line at work. Before that, she would drink baijiu with leaders and colleagues at bureau dinners, drinking until she was unconscious and had to be carried home. Afterward, she declined all such gatherings. If she couldn't avoid attending, she wouldn't touch a drop of alcohol. She threw herself into her actual work and did it to the best of her ability. To stand firm and be recognized at a place like the Machinery Bureau, without special connections or flattering leaders, was already difficult. To get promoted would have required far more, and neither Dongping nor I could accept that. Knowing when to step back was the best choice.

What remained was for me to drive her around the province on weekends, changing our environment to improve our state of mind. We went to many places — one new place each trip, each lasting a day or two: Yantai, Weihai, Zhucheng, Shouguang,

Pingdu, Laixi. We'd wander around, eat local food, find a place to stay for a night or two. During holidays or Spring Festival, our favorite destination was Shanghai. Three or four times we brought my father-in-law along — we'd drive eight or nine hours from Qingdao to my father-in-law's hometown in Rudong, Jiangsu, then the two of us would go on to Shanghai for a few days. In 2015, we took Grandpa, Grandma, and our niece Jiayin on a road trip to Suzhou, Shanghai, and Yangzhou.





Dongping's favorite city was Shanghai. She said half her blood was southern, and Shanghai — its climate, culture, and character — was everything she longed for. We had two favorite places to stay there. One was Haiyue Binjiang Apartments, at the southeast corner of Dongfang Road and Changyi Road. We usually stayed on the twenty-ninth or thirtieth floor — west-facing windows looked out at the Oriental Pearl Tower, north-facing windows overlooked the Huangpu River. When Haiyue was fully booked, we'd stay at the Maixin'ge Boutique Hotel, at the northwest corner of Yuanshen Road and Rushan Road — a trendy little place. Next to the hotel was a restaurant called Nanxun Shijia, serving classic southern cuisine. Dongping loved it, especially their thin noodles served in a small pot with a few side dishes. Just the two of us eating there — it was pure contentment.

The last time we planned to go to Shanghai was Spring Festival 2017. We had booked flights for New Year's Eve to stay at Haiyue. But on the morning of New Year's Eve Eve, after I dropped my father-in-law at the Sifang long-distance bus station, I had a heart

attack on the way home. I had a stent inserted that evening. After that, Dongping and I never made it back to Shanghai.

Changing our environment and experiencing life together helped. It improved her depressive state to some degree. It was part of our shared life.

Psychology Studies and Life

From her first contact with psychology to her formal study of the subject, Dongping believed it was an eminently practical discipline. Through learning, she gradually understood the roots of the difficulties and pain she had experienced in her own growth. She learned to reinterpret the loneliness and helplessness she had felt when no one understood her. As confusion and inner knots loosened one by one, she found answers to many questions. She shared her learning and insights with me, and our relationship grew better and better. She sparked my own interest in psychological issues as well. She also tried to use her knowledge to understand the psychological changes her father-in-law and her own mother had experienced in their final days.

Some reports note that every healthy person carries potentially cancerous cells in their body — some people develop the disease, while others' bodies keep it under control. For the vast majority of cancer patients, changes in mental state are critical to the disease's progression. This is inseparable from mental health and psychological adjustment.

Dongping felt that as social competition intensified and the pace of life accelerated, people experienced more confusion and trouble than ever before. Counselors could effectively help them relieve or adjust these psychological problems and conflicts. It was a profession of "helping others to help themselves" — both sides grew. It was what she had been searching for all those years.

It was the career she truly wanted.

Through her studies, she learned what qualities a qualified counselor should possess: kindness, optimism, sincerity, warmth, independence, approachability, a cooperative spirit, a positive attitude toward life, and the ability to evaluate oneself accurately. In daily life, she worked to maintain a peaceful demeanor, to control and regulate her emotions, and to sustain good interpersonal relationships. She began applying psychological knowledge to regulate herself, using methods like listening to music and exercising to release stress. When she encountered psychological problems she couldn't solve alone, she proactively sought guidance from supervisors.

She realized that to become a qualified counselor, she needed not only extensive psychological knowledge, counseling skills, and relevant legal knowledge — she also needed to overcome certain weaknesses in her own character, to hold herself to rigorous professional standards, to maintain neutrality in counseling, to accept clients unconditionally, and to view setbacks with rationality. When she needed help, she sought supervision and support from senior counselors, approaching each client with conscientious seriousness. At the same time, she strengthened her study of professional ethics, reinforcing her moral cultivation — not only to project a good professional image, but more importantly, to create a trustworthy environment for her clients. Dongping hoped to receive more systematic professional training in the future, to master more specialized knowledge, diagnostic techniques, and counseling skills. She wanted to further improve her psychological resilience, approach counseling work with the right attitude, and accumulate experience step by step. She understood that a counselor's growth requires the courage to take responsibility and face challenges. She was determined to

approach it with a level heart, growing continuously through learning and practice.

Becoming an outstanding psychological counselor was her direction for the future, and one of the most important goals in her life. She knew the road of learning ahead was long. To help others, one must first help oneself — only by growing oneself could she possibly help others and become a blessing to them.

Faith and Life

Dongping's pursuit of personal faith was among the most sincere and diligent I have ever seen. Under my mother's influence and guidance, we both came to believe in the Lord in 2003 — she was about a month and a half ahead of me. From the time we joined Brother Wang's house church, her passion for service inspired other brothers and sisters. She was not only earnest in reading the Bible and learning to pray, but also brought the organizational skills she had developed at work into the church. Every year at the church's Christmas celebration performances, she would create something fresh and different — deeply appreciated by her fellow church workers. Beyond that, she actively searched for suitable meeting places for the church, persuading me to offer our purchased or rented homes for church gatherings free of charge. Twice — once for Brother Wang's church, and once for the 3G Yangwang Church — totaling twelve years.

I should mention two things that happened in this church that Dongping deeply regretted. One was that Hu Shuang's grandmother shared the gospel with her nephew. He attended the initial catechism class, but only made it to a few Sunday services before his company sent him to work in another city for three years. During that time, he stopped attending. When he came back, his younger brother and his girlfriend had decided to get

married. According to local customs in the rural areas of Yantai and Laiyang, the older brother must marry before the younger brother can. But the older brother had started a relationship with a girl from the northeast during his out-of-town assignment. His mother didn't accept this girl. She asked my mother to find a match for her eldest son. Since both my mother and Dongping hoped he would marry a sister in the Lord, they introduced him to a woman from the church. But due to issues with emotional foundation and mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relations, the marriage ended in divorce within two years.

The other thing was that Dongping, because she didn't have clear boundaries in her relationships, unintentionally became a listener to the marriage problems of the church's pastor and other members. The pastor's wife confided in her about problems in her own marriage. Brothers and sisters shared their marital struggles. Young believers poured out their confusion about dating and marriage. Dongping herself wasn't yet familiar with the Bible — she was still an infant in her spiritual life. She tried to help others with nothing but the passionate energy of her own flesh. And unintentionally, she hurt herself, and hurt others too. After these experiences, Dongping realized that family and marital problems are complex. To intervene in them, you need both psychological training and biblical knowledge — simple passion is not enough. These painful experiences only strengthened her resolve to study psychology and biblical truth in the years that followed.

After the church's structural changes and the failures described above, in addition to studying psychology and earning her counselor certification, she made up her mind to find her own way to study the Bible. Starting in 2014, she participated in DTS (Discipleship Training School), SBS (School of Biblical Studies), and FCS (Family Counseling) organized by Korean Pastor Li Luan,

and received completion certificates. Since she was already on internal early retirement by then, she had more time and studied with extraordinary diligence. During this period, she also went to Jeju Island in South Korea to study at a worship school, experiencing the dedication of Korean pastors and their passion for spreading the gospel. She participated in evangelism trips within Shandong Province and to the Philippines. She gained a great deal.





Now, as I look back on Dongping's journey from the time she came to believe in the Lord in 2003 — especially her final four years, from the discovery of her illness on February 1, 2019, to when the Lord took her home in the early hours of December 15, 2022 — she walked with the Lord through her pain, never left Him, and steadied her mind with His Word. Whenever I recall those scenes, my heart is flooded with emotions.

In the beginning, her passion burned bright, but she knew too little of biblical truth. The rigid rules of the system also held her tight. Her pursuit of the Christian faith was still muddled — and I was the same. In serving the church, we often mistakenly believed that doing more for the church, helping more brothers and sisters solve their problems, was the same as walking with the Lord. This kind of service, built on the energy of the flesh, often left a hollow feeling in quiet moments. What was that feeling? It wasn't real loneliness. It was the sense of ignoring one's own true feelings, even covering up one's genuine thoughts and actions, to pander to the needs of others in the church body.

When illness struck, she suddenly found all those neglected feelings piled up in front of her, impossible to escape. She had to face them. In that moment, her desire to pray and repent was so urgent — and yet so hard to fulfill. Yes, those accumulated, overlooked feelings — year after year — were what we all truly needed to face. In the face of illness, people are most real. She thought of all those items for repentance she had prayed over, year after year, only to be overcome again and again by the strength of her own flesh. Each time, they were buried deeper inside her. So when real repentance was needed in the face of her illness, her prayers felt empty and powerless.

If we could do it all over again, we would face every problem in life and work honestly. We wouldn't let any unpleasant feeling between us slide by unnoticed. We'd bring it up, face it together, discuss it, and solve it together. "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Ephesians 4:26). The cracks that form between husband and wife most often come from those small, seemingly insignificant problems and bad feelings that get pushed down into the heart, unspoken — met with silence. Over time, you become familiar strangers.

I used to have a quick temper — direct and blunt. The good side was that I solved problems fast. The bad side was that I got worked up easily. I didn't like communicating with others. I preferred to make decisions on my own. But then I would worry and feel anxious about things I couldn't control. Year after year, this took a toll on my body. Dongping was the type who did things with energy and speed, but she was also easily frightened. Compared to my impatience, she was actually more prone to worry and anxiety — yet she would pretend to be strong in front of others. She was someone who didn't like admitting defeat. She would rather swallow her own grievances and solve other

people's problems, ignoring her own condition.

My body started showing signs of wear in my forties — my blood pressure climbed year after year, and my cardiovascular system sent distress signals through blockages. Dongping's body showed signs through her weakened spleen and stomach, leading to depletion of vital energy and blood, until her hematopoietic function deteriorated and sent its own alarm. After things are over, people understand one truth: the things you don't repent of in time will become the source of your regret.

Chinese Christians have been walking a different path from Christians abroad. Faith without repentance will ultimately be defeated by one's own nature and temper. That surface-level faith — whether Christian or Buddhist — will eventually, in middle age, be crushed by the bad habits we ourselves cultivated. For many, faith is really just a psychological comfort against the power games of the system, not the genuine life faith it claims to be.

From a marital perspective, whether the problems discovered through daily reflection and prayer can be perfectly resolved — this is the key to whether a couple can stay in harmony, body and soul. The thing I've said most often to Hu Shuang in recent years is this: the purpose of life is freedom and joy. Find ways to make yourself happy. Regularly reflect on the problems you encounter, write them down, and figure out how to solve them one by one. If you can't solve something right now, set it aside.

In the four years of Dongping's illness, our understanding of life surpassed everything we had learned in sixteen years of faith. Even so, we still struggled to repent of the things in our lives that didn't align with biblical truth. Was it because our determination wasn't strong enough? Or was the pressure of the system too great, making it impossible to break through our real-world selves? In this environment, it really is hard to break through.

Attached: An Evaluation from the Machinery Bureau

[Note from the author: In China's system, employees receive official evaluations in this distinctive party-style language. This one is reproduced below as a historical document.]

This is a summary of Dongping's overall situation. Below is an evaluation from the company, dated around the end of 2008. This evaluation is steeped in the distinctive language of China's political system. Since China is a so-called socialist country under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, many of the titles and descriptions are vastly different from those in America or other countries. I am reproducing it here almost verbatim, so that readers can gain a full understanding of how this country and its enterprises manage their people. Such evaluations are not unique to Dongping — they happen to anyone who works within the system, including Hu Shuang's father, grandfather, and maternal grandfather. It is a microcosm of the era.

Organizational Evaluation:

Comrade Zhang Dongping has, since joining the workforce in 1989, worked in the following positions: enterprise Youth League Committee, parent company comprehensive statistics, trade union officer, trade union cashier, finance department cashier, and office clerk. Her work style has always been rigorous. She is upright in character, honest in conduct, does not seek personal gain, and takes the overall situation into account. She consistently emphasizes the study of professional theoretical knowledge, continuously strengthens her self-cultivation, actively conducts ideological and political work, and strives to improve her own quality. She possesses strong work capabilities and is widely recognized by both leadership and colleagues.

During her tenure as head of the Qingdao Electric Motor Factory Youth League Committee from 1991 to 1997, she founded the

League publication Morning Dew, which was widely acclaimed. Closely centered on the enterprise's Party and administrative work priorities, she innovated, highlighted distinctive features, leveraged strengths, and focused on cultivating young talent. She extensively organized effective activities such as the "Youth Post Expert" competition, the creation of "Youth Civilization Units," youth shock brigade teams, and youth innovation and efficiency initiatives. She united, guided, and led League members and young people in persisting with reform and innovation, keeping pace with the times, and contributing their youth and strength to reform and development. She strengthened the ideological and political education of young League members and workers, emphasized positive guidance, conducted various forms of educational activities, helped young League members establish lofty ideals and firm convictions, continuously raised the ideological quality of young workers, and enhanced the sense of responsibility and mission among the youth. She deepened the effective pathways of the Youth Post Expert initiative, targeted the actual production needs of the enterprise, made full use of spare time, carried out "Five Small" technology breakthroughs, and launched "energy conservation and consumption reduction" labor competitions. These efforts not only promoted the in-depth development of the Post Expert initiative but also enhanced the attractiveness of the League organization, fully leveraging its role as a fresh force and shock brigade. She remained close to the youth, creating a favorable space for their healthy growth.

After entering the Qingdao Municipal Machinery Industrial Corporation in 1998, Comrade Zhang Dongping worked in comprehensive statistics for the parent company. Situated in the data statistical analysis department, she assiduously studied professional work, led more than twenty enterprises under the

bureau, and made important contributions to the city's machinery industry statistical work. During her tenure in the company's trade union from 2003 to 2006, as the reform of state-owned enterprises intensified, the internal industrial structure, organizational structure, and workforce structure of enterprises underwent substantial adjustments. The previous unified planned economic structure was completely broken. Economic components, organizational forms, employment methods, interest relationships, and distribution methods all underwent profound changes, presenting the diversification of economic structures, the complexity of labor relations, and the diversification of employment methods. This brought unprecedented difficulties and challenges to trade union work in state-owned enterprises. Faced with such a situation, she closely focused on the overall situation of reform, development, and stability, comprehensively strengthened trade union construction, fully performed the four functions of the trade union, and earnestly implemented the system of transparent governance and democratic supervision. She studied the new situations and problems encountered in current trade union work and explored new pathways for enterprise trade union work suited to the demands of the new situation. She effectively stimulated the work enthusiasm and production initiative of employees, diligently fulfilling her duties for the prosperity and development of society.

In 2007, Comrade Zhang Dongping was assigned to company document work. She obeyed the organization's assignment and earnestly studied professional knowledge. As a staff member in the bureau's document work, she served as an advisor and assistant, bearing the task of conveying leadership intent and serving all aspects of office work. This included the full range of

work involved in drafting, processing, and managing documents, as well as collecting, managing, and providing access to valuable document materials. Proper document filing serves as the link connecting document work and archival work. She strengthened the routine collection of documents and the provision of archival materials, solidly carrying out her new responsibilities.

Hu Shuang's Father

Hu Shuang's father, Hu Ming, was born on March 26, 1968 (the 28th day of the 2nd month in the lunar calendar, Year of the Monkey). Let me introduce myself in the first person. I have a younger brother, Hu Bo, two years my junior. My father is Hu Yuzhen, born on September 3, 1940 (Year of the Dragon). He was the second of three brothers and had one older sister. His family originally came from Laixi, Shandong, and before retiring he served as vice principal at three different middle schools in Qingdao. My mother is Xiu Lanhua, born on February 20, 1941 (Year of the Snake). She was the second of four sisters and had three younger brothers. Before retiring, she was an elementary school teacher in Qingdao.

Both my parents graduated from Laiyang Normal College in Shandong, which at the time was a specialized secondary school diploma. After graduation, they were assigned along with several other classmates to teaching positions in downtown Qingdao. You can imagine that even today, a young couple starting out after graduation would have a tight budget, let alone in the late 1960s. Beyond their own household expenses, my mother also had to send money back to her family — her three younger brothers needed to get married, and the family needed money to build houses and pay for weddings. As the only one among seven siblings working in the city, my mother shouldered nearly the entire family's burden.

After I was born, I apparently had a big appetite but could never get enough to eat. This contradiction left me underdeveloped — at a year old, I was still scrawny and dark-skinned. That year, my maternal grandmother and my eldest uncle came from the

countryside to Qingdao to visit. When they saw me, their hearts ached. "Why don't we take him back to the village and raise him for a few years?" they suggested. My mother was already pregnant with my brother and was worried about how to care for me, so she agreed readily. It lifted a heavy burden from the young couple.

And so I returned with my maternal grandmother to her rural home in Laiyang — Shangpu Gezhuang Village in Muyudian Township. Life there was hard. There was no electricity, no paved roads, no cookies. But there were green mountains, clear streams, playmates, and three uncles to keep me company. I lived in the countryside until I was six and a half years old before being sent back to Qingdao. During those years, the food was all locally grown: sweet potatoes, dried sweet potatoes, sweet potato leaves, cornmeal steamed bread, dark wheat bread, and soybean noodles were the staples. Wheat-flour buns were almost never seen, let alone white-flour ones. I only remember having them during Chinese New Year or at weddings. But none of this hindered my growth — in fact, I grew sturdier and stronger than I'd been in Qingdao. I made a group of country friends, though I've since lost touch with all of them. The only thing I still have is a photo of me with a neighbor boy named Guanghai. In it I look healthy and fair-skinned. I wonder where Guanghai is now. I hope he's doing well.



My three uncles, when they weren't working the fields, spent their free time playing with me. My eldest uncle was twenty-four years older than me, and my third uncle was twelve years older. My second uncle fell somewhere in between. Third Uncle, being closest to me in age, didn't have to do as much farm work, so he spent the most time with me. He took me rabbit hunting with an old shotgun, shot cicadas with a slingshot, raided birds' nests, caught bats, grasshoppers, katydids, bean worms, golden beetles — just about every form of rural childhood entertainment you could imagine. Food was scarce in the countryside, so most of the things we caught ended up as extra snacks at home. Cicadas, grasshoppers — they were all edible. In those days, eating them was a treat. Now, I wouldn't touch them.

My eldest uncle got married just before I returned to the city. I think he was almost thirty. My maternal grandmother arranged the wedding, and it was a lively affair. Neighbors from the village — adults and children alike — came to see the new bride and to get a share of the wedding treats. What I remember most vividly were the white-flour buns, which we never got to eat ordinarily but could taste at the wedding. They were enormous. They'd be steamed the day before, and on the wedding day someone would cut them into two- or three-centimeter cubes and put them on plates as snacks for the guests. I was too young to sit at the main table back then. On important occasions, women and children couldn't sit at the table to eat — they could only cook and stir-fry by the stove, and after all the work was done, they'd grab a bite by the cooktop. These so-called traditions weren't really about showing respect to guests. At bottom, it was because the family was too poor to have enough food for everyone, so the guests ate first, and the women and children had to make do with leftovers. I didn't get to attend my second and third uncles' weddings. Third

Uncle was clever from a young age and learned to drive a tractor early on. He was very popular in the village — for hauling goods or doing big jobs, everyone called on Third Uncle. He actually got married before Second Uncle, and his wife was a very virtuous woman. Second Uncle, on the other hand, was honest and simple, a bit slow, and had trouble finding a wife. Years later he married hastily. His wife looked normal enough, but she'd been a bit simple-minded since childhood, always grinning foolishly at people. She was a hard worker, though, and gave Second Uncle a son and a daughter. The children themselves were normal. But that son was too wild — in his early twenties, he ate some spoiled bananas, got poisoned, and died. Second Uncle was heartbroken. Not long after, while out walking, he was hit by a car that sped off. One of his legs never healed right, and he's been lame ever since. My mother was especially fond of Second Uncle, because he never seemed as sharp as the others. Unlike Eldest Uncle, who was a carpenter, and Third Uncle, who drove a tractor and never worried about making a living, Second Uncle struggled. So my mother often helped him out. After she passed away, every Chinese New Year I'd send him some food and call to check in. His daughter and son-in-law are good people and take care of him and his wife day to day. I've lost touch with Eldest Uncle and Third Uncle now. Eldest Uncle's son graduated from university, became a civil servant in Beijing, bought an apartment, and brought Eldest Uncle and his wife to live with him. Third Uncle's family moved into Laiyang city proper. Only Second Uncle still lives in the old village house.

At six and a half, I returned to Qingdao. I spent half a year in kindergarten at Bei Zhongjiawa Number One Elementary School, where my mother also taught, before starting first grade. When I first came back to Qingdao, I didn't feel like this was my home.

Because there was someone else who thought it was his home — my younger brother, Hu Bo. And when you think about it, it made sense. When he was born, I was already gone. He'd grown up to be five and a half years old without me. And suddenly this older brother he'd never known appeared. We clashed constantly. I, the older one, would bully him. He, insisting that this was 'his house,' would run to our parents and report every little thing I did. This 'brother who dropped out of nowhere' got plenty of scoldings from Mom and Dad.



Fortunately, there weren't many toys in the house, and our parents did their best to help us get along. We were just kids, so we soon started playing together. After that, our father started giving each of us one of everything. I remember he asked someone to turn old school chair backs into two wooden swords for 'chopping enemies' — one in plain wood for me, the other dark brown for my brother. He also made two small stools, one for each of us. With this 'fair' treatment, our relationship gradually improved.

My elementary school years were split between Bei Zhongjiawa Number One Elementary School and Taipingzhen Elementary School. Since my mother was the homeroom

teacher for another class in the same grade, she naturally kept a close eye on me. I was a fidgety kid and had trouble paying attention in class. One time, while the teacher was writing on the blackboard with her back to us, I shaped my hand into a pretend gun and aimed it at her — several times. Some classmates noticed and started snickering, and after class they reported it to the teacher. Since my mother was also a homeroom teacher at the school, the teacher scolded me and then told my mother about it. Normally, since my own child was clearly in the wrong, a simple scolding would have been enough. But that wasn't how my mother handled it. She said, "He's just a kid — aiming at the teacher a few times isn't like he actually fired a gun. Just tell him not to do it again, no need to make a big fuss." And in a huff, she transferred me into her own class. Later, my original homeroom teacher went to the principal about it. The principal didn't take a clear position either way and ended up mediating, which is how I got transferred back out of my mother's class.

This incident shows that my mother was rather indulgent with her children. Another time, when I was in third grade — around 1978 — life was tight even in the cities. I and three or four other classmates did a little shoplifting at the market after school one day. We got caught, and the school was notified. The teachers called our parents. Since both my parents were schoolteachers, I fully expected a severe punishment when I got home. But my mother shielded me — she probably talked my father out of it too — so that evening I only got a verbal scolding, no "torture session." This lenient treatment went completely against my expectations, because back then it was very common for parents to beat and scold their children when they did something wrong. And that's

exactly what planted a seed of false hope in me — a feeling that I might get away with things. It laid the groundwork for a series of boundary-crossing mistakes I would make later in life.

Today, of course, my father can no longer give me that lesson I never got. I suppose that's a lifelong regret. I often think about how parents, when they first come together, probably don't know how to raise children either. I understand that now. All things considered, I think my parents did a better job raising me than most of my peers' parents did. But that one instance of lax discipline was a real failure on their part. My father should have resisted my mother's pleading and given me a good thrashing — made sure I learned my lesson, knew right from wrong, knew what I could and absolutely could not do, so I could stay on the right path in life.

My mother felt she had lost face over the whole shoplifting incident, so she transferred me to another school — and transferred herself along with me — to Qingdao Taipingzhen Elementary School. That school has since been demolished as part of the shantytown redevelopment in the 1990s, but that incident remains unforgettable. I studied there for two more years and graduated from elementary school there. The teachers were all very good to me. I finally grew up a bit, little by little, and got into Qingdao No. 38 Middle School with decent grades, where I completed my first year of junior high. Even though both my parents were teachers, neither my younger brother nor I ever wanted to become teachers ourselves. My childhood dream was to join the military. It must have been because I grew up during the Cultural Revolution, when everywhere I looked and everything I heard was about how the People's Liberation Army heroically fought

enemies and defended the country, along with stories of heroes like Lei Feng, Zhang Side, Huang Jiguang, and Dong Cunrui constantly inspiring my young heart. Everything was going fine until I got conjunctivitis while roller skating at Haibohe Park one weekend in eighth grade. On top of that, an incompetent doctor at Haici Hospital misdiagnosed me, and it quickly turned into keratitis. I had to take a semester off from school. For a while I had to go to the ophthalmology department at Shibe District Hospital almost every day to have my left eye's dressing changed. After the dressing change, I couldn't be exposed to light and had to cover the eye with gauze. After several months, the keratitis in my left eye healed — my vision was about 20/20 — but my right eye, from all the strain, had become nearsighted. So there I was, deeply frustrated and sighing, having to repeat a grade. To make me feel better, my father transferred me to Qingdao No. 23 Middle School, where he worked, and I finished two years of junior high there.



My father was the vice principal of this school. With his strict guidance and the kind help of the teachers there, my grades climbed from the bottom twenty of the class all the way to the

top of the grade level. My graduation exam scores were first in the entire grade, which I suppose brought honor to my father. When I say the teachers showed me kindness, it was because my father took his work seriously and treated his colleagues well, and I still had a decent academic foundation. They doubled their goodwill toward my father by showing it to me instead, which certainly helped my grades shoot up and helped me become a class officer.

Under these circumstances, I could have stayed at the school for vocational high school and then joined the military once I was old enough. But my eyesight was a concern, and I was hesitating. My father noticed my struggle. One day after lunch, he called me over to Jiading Mountain behind the school and had a heart-to-heart talk with me for over half an hour. He said, "If you want to keep studying at No. 23, you don't even need to take an exam. But you should think about your future. Your mother and I only have specialized secondary school diplomas. We really hope you can go to regular high school and try to get into college — that way you'll have a better foundation for your career. After all, our country has just started reform and opening up. In the future, we'll need more educated people to join the workforce." His words touched me deeply. That was the moment I made up my mind to aim for regular high school.

By then, we had moved from Zhongjiawa to Anshan Si Road, where we had a simple three-bedroom apartment. The closest schools were Qingdao No. 16 Middle School, and then No. 17 and No. 19. Given my grades, I thought No. 19 would be a stretch, but No. 16 or No. 17 were within reach. So I chose to apply to Qingdao No. 16 Middle School, which was closest to home. I got in, and my class rank was around the top fifteen or

so. Maybe I got a little full of myself. In high school, I became class president and also served as sports secretary. I got hooked on basketball and spent hours playing every afternoon, letting my studies slide. By the end of my first year, my rankings had dropped to 21st and then 38th. But on the bright side, I was honored as an Outstanding Student Leader of Qingdao City, which was some small comfort.



(From left to right: Hu Ming, father Hu Yuzhen, mother Xiu Lanhua, younger brother Hu Bo, around 1986)

During summer vacation after my first year of high school, I suddenly felt the urgency of preparing for the college entrance exam and remembered why my father had encouraged me to go to regular high school in the first place. So I summoned the same drive I'd had in junior high, organized all the first-year material during break, and previewed some of the second-year curriculum. Our school, like most, planned to finish most of the coursework by the end of second year so that senior year

could be devoted entirely to exam review. I'd say my efforts in second year paid off — my class rank gradually improved. My mock exam scores before the gaokao weren't spectacular, but they put me in the category of students who had a reasonable shot at admission. I was never one of those exceptionally bright students; I was solidly average, maybe a bit above average on a good day.

On my college application form, I put Changsha Railway Institute as my first choice and Qingdao Chemical Engineering Institute as my second. But when my mother found out, she worried that Changsha was too far from home and couldn't bear to have me so far away — so she simply crossed it out. It took me years to understand this: both my parents came from the countryside to Qingdao and knew all too well the pain of being separated from their own parents. It made sense that they wanted me to stay in Qingdao for school.

In the end, I scored 496 on the gaokao, plus 20 extra points from my Outstanding Student Leader award, for a total of 516. That got me into Qingdao Chemical Engineering Institute, where I majored in Chemical Equipment and Machinery.

When I went to register, before I'd even made my bed, the department counselor came to find me. He asked me to choose between being class monitor or party secretary. I said monitor. He said fine and handed me a little booklet — I can't remember the title, but something along the lines of "The Psychology of College Girls." Then he said, "As class monitor in college, you especially need to pay attention to girls' psychology. Take a good look." Clearly, he'd come prepared.

The school changed its name to Qingdao University of Science and Technology in 2002, but that doesn't really matter to me. The alma mater in my heart is Qingdao Chemical Engineering

Institute, not this new name. After graduation, since several classmates and I still lived in Qingdao, we organized reunions for the 15th, 20th, and 25th anniversaries, gathering our class of '87 from the Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Department to meet up in Qingdao, share meals, and catch up. In 2021, we were supposed to have a 30-year reunion, but it never happened — nobody wanted to organize it, and nobody dared to come. I doubt we'll ever have that kind of reunion again.



Before retirement, I think most people harbor at least a little ambition — wanting to do this or that. By the time you're approaching retirement, your mind is fully mature. You know exactly what you can and cannot do, and you no longer feel the need to please anyone. So I've gradually lost interest in those kinds of gatherings. For me, now that I've officially stepped back from the front line, I've spent the past two years constantly reflecting. Aside from reflecting, I also review the things I did when I was younger and ask myself whether I'd make the same choices today. I wonder if others do the same.

Speaking of which, let me talk about my beliefs and my work. From a professional standpoint, as a member of the Communist Party, that should be my belief — or at least that's what the party constitution says. In China, once you join the party, you're supposed to dedicate your life to it, no room for ambiguity. I was already a party member when I was a student leader in college. Back then, I was frequently inspired by the party's grand narratives and thought that was my faith. But that kind of faith couldn't answer the fundamental questions I had about life — love, marriage, the purpose and meaning of work. Over time, I came to realize that being a Communist Party member wasn't the kind of personal faith I needed. I can't live my life working 24 hours a day. I need my own space and time to think about how to live with dignity as a human being on this planet — even if I were in chains, nothing could restrict the freedom of my thoughts.

As a child, I often wondered where I came from, but I couldn't explain it. It wasn't until after college, while working at Qingdao Chemical Plant (later renamed Qingdao Haijing Chemical Plant) in a job with so much idle time that I kept asking myself — where do people come from, and where do they go? The security guard at the factory gate and I were pretty close. One time I went to his place for a meal and found out his mother was a Christian. She took me to a house church gathering, but I didn't get to talk to anyone one-on-one, so after two visits I just stopped going. Back then, my worldview was pretty narrow. I believed that working hard was what life was all about — that work came first, because without high-quality work, how could you have a high-quality life? But what if your work wasn't grand or meaningful? Wouldn't life be an even bigger mess? At the time, I was doing equipment

maintenance in one of the workshops, with very little to do — about 80% of my time was idle. Over time, that left me feeling lost, unable to find direction in my work or to live a good life. By 1996, the plant's neoprene rubber business was declining because of competition from Japanese imports. Our rubber had too many impurities and was too expensive, so the production line ran on and off, and by 1997 it was shut down for months at a time. During this period, I mostly stayed home taking care of Hu Shuang. Since there was nothing to do at the plant anyway, I started tinkering with computers at home. My college major was equipment and machinery, but deep down I was fascinated with computers. Back then, Liaoning Road's Electronics and Information City was full of small shops selling assembled computers and software — the market was booming. So I built a computer at home and taught myself how to use and maintain it. I installed AutoCAD and bought a book on how to draw with AutoCAD V10. So while taking care of Hu Shuang, I learned computer-aided drafting. Since I was a mechanical engineering major and loved computers, I quickly got good at creating mechanical drawings with the software.



It's funny how things work — just when you feel like you've hit a dead end, a door opens somewhere else. Word got around that I knew AutoCAD, and the head of the design office heard about it. He asked the plant's chief engineer to transfer me from the workshop to the design office. The design office was responsible for designing the plant's process equipment and more, with many specialties: mechanical, civil, architectural, electrical, plumbing, and so on. But they all used traditional drafting methods — designers would draw on white paper, then tracers would trace the drawings onto tracing paper, a semi-transparent paper, which would then be blueprinted to produce the final blueprints.

After I arrived at the design office, with the support of Director Zhang, I gradually taught the professional designers in each group to move away from hand drafting and start using AutoCAD. The biggest advantage was that once you finished a drawing, you could print it directly onto blueprint paper, and you could revise it as many times as you needed. This dramatically improved design efficiency and reduced — even eliminated — the need for manual tracing. The design office could also purchase professional electronic large-scale design systems and make secondary computer modifications to the drawings. All of these changes raised the overall capabilities of the design office to a whole new level.

Director Zhang and the plant leadership were very pleased. These efforts contributed significantly to the plant's 60,000-ton ionic membrane caustic soda project, and for that I was promoted to deputy director of the design office on a probationary basis. That year was incredibly demanding, but receiving that recognition felt deeply satisfying. I say this because throughout that year, the director, my colleagues, and

I worked together from dawn till dusk. The chemical plant started at 7:30 AM, but I was usually at the office by 6:30. We got off at 4:30 PM, but I often stayed late, and after dinner and drinks with the director and a junior colleague, I wouldn't get home until around 11 PM. Most days I left and came home without ever seeing my child, and I could barely communicate meaningfully with my wife. So the achievements were inseparable from the team's hard work. In my new role, I focused mainly on computer-related work and databases. Though it was very different from the factory floor, I felt I could see my own value here, and I worked harder and harder, with greater focus. But work was still just work. I still hadn't found direction in my life or a sense of belonging in terms of faith. So after a little over a year in the design office, with my family's help, I applied for a job at a Hong Kong-owned company in the telecom industry. I spent eight years there and had a lot of emotional attachment to the place, but the pressures of life and my inner drives eventually forced me to leave.

Apart from a three-month probation period, I officially joined Qingdao Unicom in November 1998. In this new environment, I worked on computer-related tasks — maintaining business systems and managing databases. Though it was very different from the factory, here I could see my own value, and I worked harder and with greater focus. Over the next two years, in addition to computer maintenance, I also took on value-added services work. In 2001, I successfully competed for a deputy department manager position and moved into marketing. In 2007, I was promoted to manager of the CDMA business division. Over my career, I held many other roles at both the department and district levels. As the challenges

grew, so did my professional skills. But my attention to my family shrank. The center of my life tilted more and more toward work and work-related circles. I spent less time with my family and children, my marriage grew distant, and at one point I felt completely lost — drifting through society like a human tool.

In 2003, one bad association almost tore my family apart. After I confessed to my family, my wife and elders forgave me. They actively sought help from the pastor of the church my mother attended. The pastor didn't handle it like some social mediation — instead, he guided me to reflect on my mistakes, to repent and pray before God, to ask for God's help, and to entrust everything to Him rather than trying to bear it all alone. He taught me to surrender the whole process completely and rely on God's guidance to find my way out of that difficult place.

This approach and the prayer of surrender quickly calmed my anxious heart. It also comforted my wife and family, and step by step we walked out of that dark time, and life returned to its former peace. Through this experience, I came to understand that work relationships and their associated social connections are only one part of life. The most important thing in life has always been family. After this, my wife and I began attending church with my mother. I accepted the Lord on April 15, and my wife followed on May 26. As I mentioned before, my wife and I served the church enthusiastically. Later that year, we bought a slightly larger home, which also served as the church's gathering place for the next eight years. During this time, in my work and social interactions, there was a red line in my heart — the teachings of the Bible. Though the environment I faced was complicated and full of dangers and

temptations, and though I sometimes fell into them, that red line constantly reminded me what to do and what to avoid. If I were to sum up this period in one sentence: with the Bible's truth as my standard, I knew what not to do, and I could steer clear of about 80% of it, but a small portion of wrongs I still couldn't avoid or didn't avoid.

Eventually, because of internal divisions among the pastors at that church, we didn't want to get caught up in the conflict or take sides, so we reluctantly left. After wandering through state-run Three-Self churches for nearly two years, we were introduced to the 3G Yangwang Church and gradually began serving there with renewed enthusiasm. By this time, we were reading the Bible once or twice a year. In 2017, we once again dedicated our home to a newly formed Bible study group called the "Jesus Life Growth Group." A year later, on July 8, in response to the church's call, we helped establish a branch church called "Tree of Life Church." To give the dozen or so brothers and sisters in the new congregation a spacious place to gather, we made a unilateral decision: with three months still left on our current lease, we rented a larger and more expensive place — Haiyue Center — as our meeting space.



I say "unilateral decision" because in our previous church, we'd offered our home as a gathering place because that church was financially limited — it couldn't afford to buy property. We happened to need a home anyway, so after buying it, we simply contributed the living room, dining room, and bathroom for gatherings. But by this time, our circumstances had changed. To fund Hu Shuang's study abroad expenses, we had taken advantage of the real estate peak in 2016 — we sold one apartment we'd owned for just over a year at a high price. That was the second half of 2016. We immediately bought another apartment in Laoshan District, but unfortunately, due to demolition-related delays, it wasn't delivered for four years. By then, we were dealing with Hu Shuang's mother's illness, so we never moved in. For over six years, the two of us were renting. Since we were renting anyway, and Hu Shuang's maternal grandpa no longer lived with us — it was just the two of us — there was really no need for such a large three-bedroom apartment. In effect, the two of us were paying out of pocket for the church's meeting space. Logically, we

should have discussed it with the other brothers and sisters before deciding to rent a bigger place. But we were still thinking the old way — happy to shoulder the cost for the church, not realizing we were also quietly adding a burden to our own lives.

After Tree of Life Church had been meeting at Haiyue Center for a few months, Hu Shuang's mother heard that the sisters of Crown of Glory Church, which had been established after ours, lacked a regular meeting place. She proactively offered to let them use Haiyue Center. So Tree of Life met on Sunday mornings, and Crown of Glory met on Sunday afternoons. This arrangement ran in parallel for a little over a year, until February 2020, when Tree of Life and Crown of Glory merged to form "Promised Land Church."



In February 2019, before all this, Hu Shuang's mother's health began to fail. She was diagnosed with aplastic anemia and thrombocytopenia. After four years of suffering, she passed away on December 15, 2022. During her illness, the brothers and sisters of Promised Land Church gave us constant

material and spiritual encouragement and support. The 3G Yangwang Church organized a charity drive among all its members and gave our family over 120,000 yuan to help with her treatment. We were deeply grateful. During her four years in the hospital, Dongping didn't attend church gatherings, but I continued serving at Promised Land Church and attending services. After each service, I would come home and share with her what we'd discussed and how I felt, and we'd talk it through together. It was really our Christian faith that helped us understand the relationship between life and faith more deeply throughout her illness. At first, our prayers were for God to heal her and restore her health. Later, our prayers shifted to asking God to guide us, to do what His providence laid before us — no longer fantasizing about other outcomes, but calmly following the path He showed us and focusing on the treatment right in front of us. If I were to sum up this period in one sentence: no longer bound by any theory or ideology, earnestly following His guidance, knowing what not to do — not even daring to ask for it — and resting peacefully in submission.

At the end of March 2024, the combined Easter service of Promised Land Church and other branches came and went. I didn't attend. And since then, I haven't gone to any more church gatherings or worship services. To be honest, though nearly all the members in the church were women, I had friendly relationships with all of them. I never had a conflict with any of them, no irreconcilable differences. None of that. But I suddenly lost the urge to share. A strong feeling came over me — I felt it was time for a "retreat." To step back, to spend time alone in spiritual practice, to give my body, mind, and spirit a chance to reset.

By now, readers may have sensed this: when Hu Shuang's mother and I did things for the church, we acted more on our own ideas than after consulting with others. In other words, what we did often carried a strong personal flavor rather than being the result of joint prayer with the congregation. This is what I've come to realize in recent years — that Hu Shuang's mother and I shared a common problem: we devoted too much energy to serving the church and not enough to personal spiritual practice and prayer. We neglected the reality of following God's footsteps back to the actual substance of our own lives. Thinking about it now, the problem wasn't with the church itself. It was about whether each person in the church had developed the habit of submitting to God's leading in their lives — rather than leading based on the material needs of the group. Maybe it's clearer to put it this way: there was nothing wrong with how Hu Shuang's mother and I served the church in the past; it met the church's needs. The problem was with us — we mistakenly thought that service could replace God's personal guidance for each individual, and to some extent, that suppressed or extinguished the Holy Spirit's prompting within us. From another angle, our enthusiastic service may have also suppressed the Holy Spirit's prompting in others. Service that looks theologically correct on the surface can actually strip the Holy Spirit of His ability to lead others. So leaving Promised Land Church wasn't Satan's interference — it was God telling me, "Child, it's time to quiet your heart and listen to what I have to say to you. It's time, in solitude, to reflect on how you've lived all these years since believing in Me, and to repent of the things that go against biblical truth." I listened to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Day after day, I reflected on my actions. On my blog at husir.org, I wrote down,

stroke by stroke, every detail of my self-examination — peacefully following God's leading, walking quietly with the Lord. Over two years, my body, mind, and spirit have all improved. Not only have I come to know myself through this self-examination, but my writings have also become a blessing and encouragement to others.

Hu Shuang's Paternal Grandparents

Parents in Memory

Hu Shuang's paternal grandparents both came from rural areas in Shandong Province — Laixi and Laiyang, which were then counties under Yantai. (Laixi was later incorporated into Qingdao in October 1983.) Both families were poor farmers, and most of their children never attended school.

Hu Shuang's paternal grandfather, Hu Yuzhen, was born on September 3, 1940, in Hu Jiadu Village, Rizhuang Town, Laixi. He was the third of four siblings — two older brothers and an older sister. His second older brother attended elementary school locally and later became a school principal. The eldest brother never went to school; instead, he joined the army. Standing over 1.8 meters tall and powerfully built, he was a decorated veteran who fought in the battle to liberate Laiyang County during China's civil war. It was said that because of so many years of night marches, he could walk on unlit roads at night as easily as in daylight — no flashlight needed. Hu Yuzhen was the best student among the children. But because the family needed hands for farm work, he had to take a year off after elementary school before starting middle school. He graduated with excellent grades and was recommended for admission to Laiyang Normal School.

Hu Shuang's paternal grandmother was named Xiu Lanhua. She was born on February 20, 1941, in Shangpu Gezhuang Village, Muyudian Town, Laiyang. She was the third of seven siblings — two older sisters, three younger brothers, and a younger sister. Originally, the family never planned to send a girl to school, but since her two older sisters refused to go, the opportunity fell to

her. To everyone's surprise, she excelled academically and, ranking first in the village, was admitted to Laiyang Normal School. It was there that she met Hu Yuzhen. After graduation, they were assigned together to work in Qingdao. In those days in China, job assignments after graduation were decided by the school — individuals had no choice at all. And for graduates of Laiyang Normal School, being assigned to a 'big city' like Qingdao or Yantai was a tremendous honor. It might not exactly have been 'bringing glory to one's ancestors,' but it was certainly something for the whole village to celebrate.



As for how they went from classmates to lovers — they never told us. Maybe they were too shy. This is very common in Chinese families. Matters of love and marriage are generally kept veiled, understood without being spoken. Since they never brought it up, my brother and I never felt comfortable asking. My guess is that fate played a part, their personalities complemented each other well (the principle of 'mutual restraint' between lovers), and they both came from poor rural backgrounds, made their way to the big city as teachers, and found comfort and support in each other

through the hardships. Marriage followed naturally. They were married around 1967 and lived in Courtyard 402, Xi Zhongjiawa, Taidong District, Qingdao. From the founding of the People's Republic until the early 1990s, this area was one of the poorest neighborhoods in Qingdao — roughly the block bounded by Yan'an Third Road to the east, Yanji Road to the south, Jintan Road to the west, and Ningxia Road to the north. Because the land was very low-lying, it looked like a depression from a distance. The original settlers had migrated from Yunnan, and a large number were surnamed Zhong — hence the name 'Zhongjiawa' (Zhong Family Depression). The neighborhood was divided into four sections: East, West, South, and North Zhongjiawa. My brother Hu Bo and I were both born here. Our home was in West Zhongjiawa, and we went to school in North Zhongjiawa. It wasn't until 1980 that my father received his first apartment from the school — the first real home our family ever had. It was a third-floor unit in a building less than three kilometers north of Zhongjiawa. From the balcony, you could see Zhongjiawa. In the morning, a thin layer of mist always hung over the hollow — a fitting name.

When I was born, in the early days of the Cultural Revolution, life was hard for everyone in China. My parents didn't really know how to care for a baby. By the time I was a year old, I was nothing but skin and bones. When my maternal grandmother came from the countryside to visit, she was heartbroken. My mother was pregnant with my brother at the time and had no energy to look after me, so my grandmother took me back to the village of Laiyang to raise me.

My grandmother lived in Shangpu Gezhuang Village, Muyudian Town, Laiyang County — about 150 kilometers from Zhongjiawa. Buses were slow back then; the trip took five to six hours, plus

some walking. When I arrived, my aunts were already married and living in other villages, so it was just my grandmother and my three unmarried uncles. All three of them adored me. My oldest uncle was twenty-four years older than me, and my third uncle was twelve years older — close enough in age that he was the one who spent the most time with me. In their spare time from farm work, they helped grandmother feed me, and as I grew a bit older, they took me to the mountains to catch insects, hunt wild rabbits, fish in the reservoir... I also made friends with many village children.

Life in the country was simple. The food was basic — dried sweet potatoes, cornmeal cakes, dark-flour steamed bread, soybean noodles, steamed sweet potato leaves. White-flour steamed buns and dumplings were reserved for holidays and weddings. I remember when my oldest uncle got married — I was almost six. The day before the wedding, they steamed big white-flour buns, let them cool, and cut them into three-centimeter cubes to hand out as treats to the villagers. For a little boy who almost never got to eat white bread, that was a feast.

I never met my maternal grandfather. My mother told me he died of an acute intestinal strangulation while she was at normal school. It came on suddenly, and with no proper medical care in the countryside, he died in agony at just 38. My grandmother single-handedly carried the family of seven children. She never remarried. She married off her daughters one by one, found wives for each of her sons, built them new houses, and never stopped farming, spinning, weaving, and sewing. Her name was Xu Guihua. She was born in 1922 — Year of the Dog — and lived to be 86. Her own family was reasonably well-off, so she had a certain refinement. She had bound feet — I saw them — but she was gentle and calm in a way that defied every stereotype about

'small-footed women.' She kept the entire household running smoothly.

I've always felt I owe her more than I can ever repay. Besides raising me, I owe her a radio. In junior high, I got into electronics and loved building crystal radios and transistor radios. I'd buy parts from electronics stores and assemble them at home. When Grandma came to stay in Qingdao, I promised I'd build a radio for her. Decades passed, and I never did. Years later, I brought it up again. She just said, quietly, 'Even if you gave me a radio, I wouldn't know what they were saying.' She seemed to have forgotten my promise altogether.

She would come to Qingdao for ten days or two weeks at a time. Among her children, my mother was one of the better-off, so visiting was like a little vacation for her. But none of us were really well-off. My parents' combined monthly salary was less than 80 RMB — barely enough to get by. Still, my mother always managed to save a little to send back to Grandma. Every son who married or built a new house needed money. In that way, my mother was Grandma's most reliable helper.

As my brother and I grew up, we stopped fighting and became reasonably friendly. We both loved it when Grandma came to stay every couple of years. She would mend clothes and make paper-cut art. Since she was illiterate and had trouble walking on her bound feet, she rarely went out. Most of her time was spent helping my mother with housework and cooking. Sometimes, when we asked, she'd tell us stories about village life. She was fascinated by telephones, cell phones, and computers — but never once showed any desire to try them. She was gentle with everyone. When she wasn't speaking, she'd sit quietly, listening to us talk, occasionally smiling to show she was following. My brother and I each related to her differently. I would take her

hand, and she'd place her other hand on mine, stroking it gently, over and over — as if a thousand words were passing through that simple touch. Her hands were thin, but the skin was smooth, and holding them felt safe.

All her clothes were handmade, from picking the cotton to spinning, weaving, and cutting. She made clothes for all her children and grandchildren. As the kids grew up and started wearing modern button-up clothes, she never switched — she wore the old-style cross-button jacket, trousers, and cloth shoes to the end. My mother once tried to buy her modern clothes, but Grandma preferred her old jacket, so they gave up.

In contrast, my father didn't send much money back to his own family. His parents had passed away long before I was born — I never met them. I've only seen one faded one-inch photo of my grandmother in my father's album. I can't remember what she looked like now — only that she wore a dark, cross-button cotton jacket. The biggest source of conflict between my parents was when my father's relatives came to stay. According to my mother, they arrived in waves, one after another, expecting to be fed and housed. Looking back, I think most of the tension came from our material limitations. If we'd had enough money to put the guests up in hotels and take them out to eat, none of this would have been an issue. The other factor was the gap in lifestyle and hygiene habits — there wasn't much common ground to begin with.

Parents' Faith

Growing up, I never had the sense that my parents were interested in any religion. It wasn't until after I got married — specifically, after my father fell ill — that my mother began to

follow the Christian faith. Before that, there wasn't a trace of religion in our home. In China, it's common for families to burn paper money for their deceased relatives at intersections during festivals. My parents never did. Many Chinese families set up a Buddhist shrine somewhere in the house — we never had one. My brother and I never discussed religion or faith with our parents. The conversations at home usually revolved around school. If there was anything that resembled 'faith' in our household, it was the communist ideals embodied by the heroes in war movies and TV shows. My father was also a Party member, and he conducted himself according to the standards expected of Party cadres at work. To outsiders, he seemed stern, but he was actually quite easygoing. He encouraged us to join the Party — not aggressively, just as a hope. Becoming a Party member and getting into university — those were his expectations for us.

After my father got sick, my mother had just retired, so the burden of caring for him fell on her. My brother Hu Bo had just graduated and was working as a traveling salesman, traveling around to find folk remedies and buy medicine for our father. I had also just started working. I was perfectly comfortable with the laid-back management at the factory, spending my days hanging out with my co-workers. My mind was not at home at all. On top of that, I had just gotten married and was no longer living with them, so I didn't know much about my father's condition. But by then, my mother had already become a Christian. She attended Sunday services regularly, read the Bible, and prayed for my father's recovery. Once, when I visited the hospital, my father was in severe pain. My mother was by his bedside, guiding him through a prayer of repentance. She said each line, and he repeated after her through the pain, asking Jesus Christ for forgiveness. That was the first time I had any real exposure to

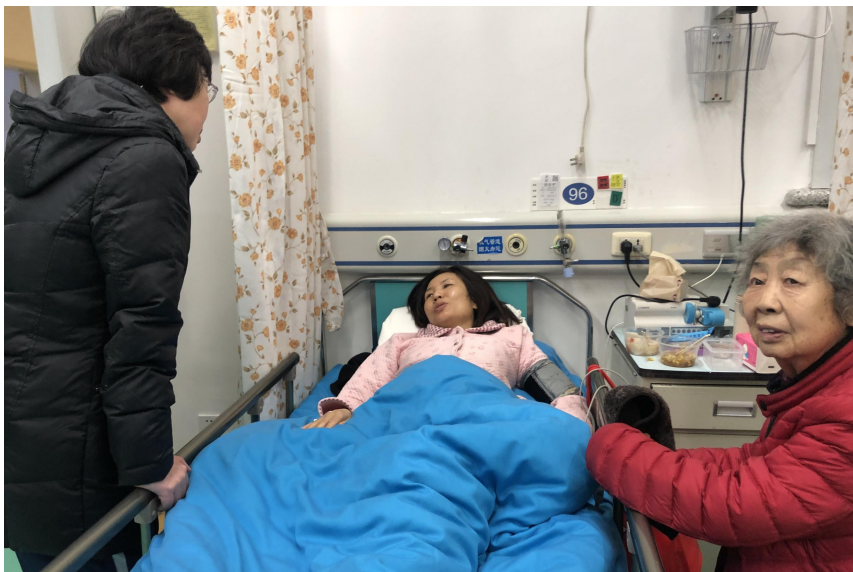
Christianity.

More than twenty years later, after going through a near-identical scene of illness and suffering myself, I finally understood what my parents had gone through — the pain and the helplessness. In this country, Party members and public-sector employees effectively have only one 'faith' that can be openly discussed: communism. Buddhism, Taoism — none of these have a proper place in public life. When people face overwhelming difficulties, they are left to wait in isolation. Even my father, a lifelong Party member, had no one to call on in his suffering except Jesus. My parents came to Qingdao together, shared nearly forty years of life, and in my father's final moments, it was my mother who brought him the Gospel. His physical pain didn't ease much, but his spirit found comfort. He passed away very peacefully — like falling asleep.

My mother was strong. She never told me how much debt she'd gone into for my father's medical treatment. She knew I had just gotten married and had a new baby to take care of, and she didn't want to add to my burden. She saved bit by bit, paid off the debt little by little. A few years later, she told me she had finally cleared the 'famine' — that's what we call debt in our local dialect. In the days immediately after my father's passing, my mother was deeply unsettled. She even briefly considered marrying a single man from the church, who had also expressed interest. But after thinking it over, she decided against it. Maybe she wanted to preserve a sense of home for my brother and me. Or maybe she was worried about the family conflicts that might follow. So instead, she sold the old house with my brother's family and bought a new one. The old place held too many memories, too much sadness — a change of scene was better for her health.

My mother lived with my brother's family for more than twenty

years, and they got along wonderfully. I would join them for holidays and family dinners, and we were always a happy family. As long as my mother was there, it was still my home — the real home. She had no bad habits. She didn't like sitting downstairs with the neighborhood elderly, gossiping in the sun. What she loved was going to church, studying the Bible at home, picking up my brother's children from school, and cooking for the family. Around age seventy-five, her memory began to noticeably decline. She would often forget the way home. Sometimes she'd knock on the wrong door. A few times, kind strangers found her wandering and took her to the nearest police station. They would call Hu Bo to come get her. This was in the months leading up to the end of 2018. Right before Chinese New Year in 2019 — just after Dongping had been diagnosed and hospitalized — my mother came to visit her in the hospital, accompanied by my brother's family. After the holiday, my brother and his wife had to go back to work. There was no one to care for my mother at home, so we had to admit her to the Seventh People's Hospital.





It turned out to be Alzheimer's disease. There's no real cure — only medication to slow the symptoms. Every week, my brother and sister-in-law would bring her home for a night to bathe her and change her clothes. But as the pandemic situation in China worsened, she couldn't come home as often. We hired a full-time caregiver at the hospital. My sister-in-law still went every week to bathe her and change her clothes. I would visit every so often, just to sit and talk with her. When I couldn't go, I'd order food delivery — roast chicken legs or something she liked — and have it sent to the hospital.

Father's Career History

Hu Yuzhen, Han Chinese, also known as Hu Yuxi. Born September 3, 1940, in Hu Jiadu Village, Rizhuang Town, Laixi County, Shandong. Holds a specialized college diploma (no degree). Former vice principal of several middle schools, with the

professional title of Level 1 Middle School Teacher. Monthly salary as of 1988: 116 yuan. Health: good.

Spouse: Xiu Lanhua, born February 20, 1941, Han Chinese, specialized college diploma, no party affiliation. Senior elementary school teacher at Qingdao Wujiacun Elementary School before retirement. Monthly salary as of 1988: 97 yuan. Two sons: Hu Ming (born March 26, 1968) and Hu Bo (born May 26, 1970).

Father Hu Guangzhao, died of illness in 1958 at age 73. Mother Wang Xiuying, died of illness in 1959 at age 60.

Education: Started elementary school late at age 9 (1949–1956). Took a year off to help on the farm (1956–1957). Attended Laixi No. 2 Middle School (1957–1960). Recommended for Laiyang Normal School due to excellent grades (1960–1963).

Employment: Assigned to Qingdao Changzhou Road Elementary School (1963). Studied at Shandong Education College (1965). Taught at Qingdao No. 45 Middle School (1965–1972), No. 23 Middle School (1972–1974), became academic dean (1974–1979) and vice principal (1979–1984) at No. 23. Served as general affairs director (1985–1987), then vice principal at Qingdao No. 53 Middle School (1987 onward).

Party membership: Joined the Communist Youth League in 1956, joined the Communist Party on February 6, 1966.

Awards: Multiple "Advanced Worker" honors, attended Qingdao municipal education conferences as a representative, recognized as a "Five-Good Student" at Shandong Education College, commended for self-study excellence at Central TV University.

Health decline: During his tenure as general affairs director, he supervised a school-run factory that made X-ray shielding rooms for hospitals. He regularly inhaled paint fumes and thinners while inspecting the workshop, despite wearing a mask. This

caused cumulative damage to his health. In 1995, he was diagnosed with a blood disease. He received treatment at Qingdao Textile Hospital (now Qingdao Central Hospital) and was transferred on paper to No. 46 Middle School. He passed away on September 16, 1997.

Hu Shuang's Maternal Grandparents' Family

Maternal Grandparents' Home

Maternal Grandpa Zhang Jing'an was Hu Shuang's mother's father. He was born on March 31, 1937 (lunar calendar, Year of the Ox). Maternal Grandma Wang Huarong was born on October 14, 1939 (Year of the Rabbit). She passed away on March 28, 2001 (lunar calendar), at age 62.

Neither of Hu Shuang's maternal grandparents was originally from Qingdao. They both came from elsewhere. Grandpa Zhang Jing'an was from Rugao, Jiangsu Province. In his early years, he studied communications at the Lianyungang military base and was assigned to the Beihai Fleet's communications unit in Qingdao in 1956. He served there as a soldier, steadily advancing until he was promoted to officer. In 1982, he was demobilized as a cadre and transferred to the Qingdao Sifang District Public Security Bureau, where he worked until retirement.

Grandma arrived in Qingdao a bit earlier than Grandpa, but they hadn't met yet when Grandpa came in 1956 — he was still a private, and new soldiers had to serve at least four years. They met in 1960. Grandma was from Wendeng, Weihai. She did well enough on her exams to be admitted to a school in Qingdao, and after graduation was assigned to the Arts and Crafts Company on Zhongshan Road. After marriage, the family lived in Shuixi Qinggou. Grandma later transferred to the Qingdao No. 5 Printing and Dyeing Factory, located north of the intersection of Ruichang Road and Jinhua Road — now long gone.

They had three daughters. The eldest, Zhang Chunhong, was born in 1968. Hu Shuang's mother, Zhang Dongping, was the second, born in 1969. The youngest, Zhang Ruwei (Weiwei), was born in 1974. When Weiwei arrived, Grandpa's military unit was distributing housing, so the family moved to 9 Tailiu Road in 1975.

Grandma was a decisive, efficient woman who dressed neatly and carried herself well. She worked at the No. 5 Printing and Dyeing Factory for many years and was universally liked. She got along with everyone and always knew the right thing to say and do. There was something almost masculine about her strength, which I suspect came from Grandpa's indecisive nature — she had to be the strong one.

The compound at 9 Tailiu Road sat at the southeast corner of Shandong Road and Xiwu Road, right along the eastern side of Shandong Road. About thirty or forty families lived there, all navy personnel and their families — specifically, officers' quarters.

If you walked from Shandong Road into Xiwu Road, along the north wall of a row of red-tiled single-story houses, after about thirty meters you'd see two square stone gateposts on your right. Stepping through, you'd look south and see a brick-paved lane about four meters wide and sixty or seventy meters long, made of reddish clay bricks. The courtyard was formed by three or four rows of single-story houses arranged in an O-shape, stretching narrow and rectangular from north to south. There was only one entrance — the opening at the northeast corner where the stone gateposts stood.

Walking further south along the brick path, at the southern end of the O-shaped area stood a two-story building running east to west. It was divided into eastern and western sections, and the

family lived on the second floor of the western section, near the center. You'd climb the outdoor stairs to the second floor. Straight ahead was another family's door. To the right were two separate bathrooms, shared by the two upstairs households. To the left was the family's front door.

The front door faced north. Stepping inside, you entered a dining room of about six square meters, with a wardrobe, a washing machine, and a folding round dining table. To the left was a door leading to a small room — six or seven square meters — which was the bedroom for the three sisters. It had no windows and felt cramped. Directly across from the door was a bed belonging to the youngest sister. To the right was a bunk bed — the mother slept on the lower bunk, the eldest sister on the upper. Near the door was a desk for the girls to study at, and on the wall hung a calendar, the kind teenage girls liked.

From the dining room, you could enter the master bedroom, which faced south with a balcony. This was the largest room, about ten-plus square meters — the parents' room. It had the obligatory large wardrobe, a bed, a pair of single-seat sofas with a tea table, a Chinese wall clock, and a calendar. It served as both bedroom and living room. All the floors were smooth cement, polished to a shine by the family's constant cleaning. The walls were freshly painted, with green paint up to about a meter from the floor — the traditional wainscoting. Sunlight streamed in through the south window, making the whole room feel warm and inviting.

The front door originally opened onto an open-air corridor, but because the family had so many children, they enclosed the corridor and turned it into a kitchen. This room had a larger door and became the real main entrance. Just inside, to the right of the doorframe, was the faucet — all the family's water came from

here. Since this was a military dependent housing compound, water was essentially free. Electricity was symbolic — barely charged. To the left of the entrance was a cutting board for food preparation. Across from the door, on the east side, were the stove and range hood. Even as a kitchen, it was kept spotless.

Looking out from the south-facing balcony of the master bedroom, you could see a red-tiled single-story house below, about three rooms in size. This had been built as an addition with special permission, originally for Dongping's grandmother (Grandpa's mother) to live in. She had her household registration here. After she died, the house was rented out. After Grandpa moved in with us following Grandma's death, the upstairs apartment was also rented out. Grandpa handled all the leasing and maintenance himself.

Grandpa was an incredibly industrious man. Everything about him radiated the qualities of a Southerner — short, about 1.6 meters, with a round face and a well-proportioned build. He walked quickly, talked quickly, and though his Southern accent was thick, it didn't diminish the firmness and conviction in his voice. Before retirement, because he worked in the public security system, he always wore his police uniform. He commuted by bicycle. As soon as he got home, he would start doing housework — as if making up for all the years he'd been absent when the children were young.



A Warm Family

The evening scene at home usually went like this: Grandma would buy the ingredients for dinner on her way home, then start washing and cooking. The girls would drift in one by one. They'd complain of hunger, and Grandma would immediately stop what she was doing, wipe her hands on her apron, and hurry inside to get them snacks — usually crackers or peach-flour pastries — while nagging, "Don't eat too much, or you won't have room for dinner." Then she'd go back to the kitchen. The three girls would drop their schoolbags, grab their snacks, and crowd into the kitchen, chattering away about their day. Grandma would respond with "Mm-hmm" and "Oh really?" while she worked, occasionally asking if they'd had a good day or how much homework they had, urging them to get started soon. But the girls never wanted to stop talking. It was the only time all day they got to chat with their mother.

When Grandpa came home, he wouldn't rush to eat. He'd change out of his uniform into his old house clothes and start cleaning — wiping tables, mopping floors, scrubbing the outdoor toilet. All of this required a lot of water. Since water was essentially free in the military compound, but pressure was low in the evenings because everyone was using it, there was always a plastic bucket sitting by the entrance, filling up continuously. You could dip into it whenever you needed, and when it overflowed, the water just ran down the drain.

You could never run out of housework. On Sundays when I went to Dongping's house, if we weren't going out for a walk, I'd help Grandpa with his chores. My jobs included repairing or replacing electrical wiring and fuses, climbing onto the roof to replace leaky tiles, doing masonry work, and in earlier days, swapping out the heavy propane tanks. Heavy lifting was par for the course. The most exhausting time was a whole morning of masonry work that wore me out completely. But Dongping's father seemed to have endless energy. We worked until after one in the afternoon. I was starving and exhausted. Grandma kept urging us to eat. Grandpa, acknowledging what a hard day it had been, broke out a bottle of beer for me to have with lunch. I was secretly delighted — until I took a sip and realized it had no flavor. No beer taste at all. There wasn't even any foam. Grandpa said, "Hu Ming, someone gave me this beer. It's been under the bed for over a year. Nobody ever drinks it. What do you think?" I checked the date on the bottle. It had expired six months ago. No wonder it was flat. Dongping told me to stop drinking it, and both she and Grandma scolded Grandpa for giving me expired beer. Grandpa just chuckled sheepishly. "I don't drink, so how would I know? It's fine — it hasn't gone bad." That was Grandpa all over — meticulous about everything except alcohol, which he never touched.

We didn't do much heavy masonry after that. Most of the time it was lighter work. Grandpa's family had no son, so I more or less filled that role. When I was still in university, I'd spend Sundays going out with Dongping, then come back to her parents' house for dinner with the two sisters. At six-thirty every Sunday evening, Tom and Jerry was on TV. I loved it. If it conflicted with dinner, I would absolutely finish watching before coming to the table. Looking back, I'm grateful my future in-laws were so understanding. Any other parents would have been annoyed. Even at the table, I barely spoke. Grandpa's quiet authority intimidated me — I was always careful about what I said and did, afraid of displeasing him. But Grandma was different. To her, I was practically a son. She'd constantly heap food onto my plate.

Dinner followed a nightly ritual. While Grandma was cooking, Grandpa would set up the folding round table in the dining room. It was about 1.4 meters in diameter, made of wood coated with brown lacquer, very finely crafted. He'd lay out the placemats for bowls and plates according to where everyone sat. Every time Grandma finished a dish, Grandpa would bring it over and arrange it on the table. When everything was ready, he'd call the girls: "Hongzi! Dongping! Weiwei! Dinner's ready!"

Grandma never came to the table right away. She'd be washing the wok and tidying the kitchen. Only after the girls called her repeatedly would she come, wiping her hands on her apron. "Well? How is it?" she'd ask. "Is it too salty or too bland?" Grandpa and I never said a word. But the three girls would chime in: "Mom, this is too salty. That one's a bit bland." Grandma would click her tongue. "Let me taste... Oh, it is too bland. I need to add some salt." Grandpa would say, "You girls are something. Just eat it!" And I'd sit there silently, thinking, This is delicious — eat up!

Leftovers almost always went to Grandpa — unless they were

exceptionally tasty, in which case the girls would fight over them. While the three daughters chatted through dinner, Grandpa would pour hot water over the leftovers, stir them up, and eat them that way, slurping down every last drop. Grandma would say, "Old Zhang, stop eating the leftovers! Isn't there enough fresh food for you?" Grandpa would glance around the table and grin. "If you're not eating it, someone has to." That was nearly every dinner, without exception. But that scene — that was what made a home feel warm. So harmonious.

Extra Love for Their Children

Dongping was born only a year and four months after her older sister. It's worth noting that Dongping was a frail baby. She told me that while she was studying for her college entrance exam retake in Yantai, she was diagnosed with cholecystitis. Not long after, a check-up revealed she was a carrier of hepatitis B with the "big three positives" markers. Before we got married, I made sure to get vaccinated. Grandma knew all about Dongping's health and was especially attentive to it. She cooked meals that were easy on Dongping's weak stomach, making sure everything was both delicious and digestible. She'd always ask for feedback on the food, worrying that if something was too salty or too bland, the girls wouldn't eat properly.

After Dongping returned from Yantai and started working, Grandma was even more careful. Her daily questions, which seemed casual, were actually a way of checking whether the girls were handling things properly at work. If she sensed anything harmful, she'd step in immediately. The family couldn't see each other during the day because everyone was at work or school. Late evenings were taken up with personal routines. Only dinner

was a time for real communication — sharing news, exchanging ideas. Grandma was like a coach, guiding her three daughters. The advice that sounded like motherly nagging was actually the distilled wisdom of experience. Grandpa rarely interrupted their conversations, but he never missed a word. He'd quietly clear the table and fold up the dining table, storing it by the kitchen window.

Chunhong and Ruwei were both generally healthy. I never heard Dongping mention any health problems with either of them. Grandpa and Grandma put a lot of thought into their daughters' careers. The eldest sister worked at a bank, which in those days had great benefits — even if the salary wasn't huge, the perks were better than most workplaces. Dongping's first job was at a department store, and her salary was lower. She'd occasionally grumble to Grandma, wishing she could work at a bank like her sister. But she'd cheer up quickly, because the department store was more relaxed, she could buy household goods at an employee discount, and she had me — an unofficial "coworker" — to keep her company. Besides, her sister worked very hard at the bank too.

Dongping got her job at the motor factory through Grandpa's connections, but her performance there exceeded everyone's expectations. Not only did she score among the top on the hiring exam, her work over the next few years won her the factory director's highest praise. If I had to say it, Dongping was Grandma's star student in the art of social navigation. Over more than twenty years in the workplace, she handled complex interpersonal dynamics — between leaders, between leaders and middle management, between colleagues — with a skill that put most ordinary employees to shame. The price was that she was constantly exhausted, mentally and physically, and her already

frail body paid the price. Eventually she had to leave the workforce. But heaven is fair — when someone is too tired, a different path opens.

Dongping was an energetic, sociable person. In her spare time, besides watching TV dramas, she loved long phone calls. She'd call her sisters, her friends, her church sisters — almost every call lasted more than half an hour. I came to realize that for her, a long phone call was like exercise. Afterwards, she was always visibly relaxed and happy, as if she'd done both a mental and physical workout. As our faith deepened, our communication with each other deepened too. Especially after the pandemic started, we talked more and more seriously about life and Christian faith. We learned what we should hold onto, what we should let go of, and what we should entrust to God. Faith isn't an abstract concept — it only means something when it's lived in the details of everyday life. Parents give their children life and a basic education. The rest of the journey depends on having the right beliefs and principles to guide you.

Ruwei, the youngest sister, also worked in a government office. Her job was as demanding as her second sister's, but she had a university degree in a relevant field, so she could handle the work competently. She wasn't as skilled at navigating office politics, but she seemed to have inherited their mother's interest in Buddhism. She found stability in Buddhist scripture, using it to manage the confusion that came with dealing with people, and to regulate her emotions. She believed strongly that faith should change behavior — that if someone's faith doesn't change how they act, then there's something wrong with that faith. Even though Dongping and I were Christians on the surface, Ruwei would say we needed more prayer, to ask God to help us accomplish things, to study the Bible deeply enough to achieve

"unity of knowledge and action." If someone's behavior doesn't match the demands of their faith, it's not that they're hiding it — it's that they haven't truly studied and understood their faith. When a person truly understands something, changing their behavior is a natural consequence. Conversely, if someone acts erratically or crudely, their inner thinking must be "in chaos." Ruwei had a noble inner life. After Grandma died, almost no one could truly understand her.

Grandpa and Grandma were, on the whole, successful in raising their children. They gave everything they had, in a complicated social environment, to lift their daughters up and help them find their place in the world. They taught them how to be decent people and how to navigate relationships. When it came to loving and caring for their children, they gave it their all, and they had nothing to be ashamed of.

Why Send Hu Shuang to Study and Live in the United States?

Finding the Real World

Let me start with the hardest decision we ever made as parents. First, for my wife and me, this was an agonizing choice. When I say "agonizing," I don't mean the simple act of deciding to send our daughter abroad to study. I mean something that would stretch across our entire lives from that point forward. Hu Shuang would have to go alone to a foreign country, far from everything she had known since childhood—leaving behind sixteen years of familiar streets and faces, leaving her parents and grandparents, with an ocean between us. The longing that comes from that kind of separation—the daily ache of wondering how she is—is a void that nothing else can fill. We would find ourselves, in the middle of the night or over a meal, unconsciously thinking about her, imagining her alone in her dorm room, in her classroom, walking down a street—wondering if she felt lonely, if she missed home.

But in the end, we made the decision. If I had to sum up the reason in one sentence, it would be this: we did not want our child to grow up in China's current education system, learning content disconnected from the real world, slowly forming a worldview that didn't match who she truly was inside. We wanted her to grow up in an environment that was closer to reality, one that allowed her to express herself as an individual, so she could become the person she herself wanted to be.

China's basic education is undeniably solid when it comes to transmitting knowledge—we have never denied that. But the high-pressure model of "one exam determines your entire life," combined with the uncertainty of finding a job after graduation, keeps too many parents up at night. The American education system puts more emphasis on a student's overall performance: beyond standardized tests, it weighs GPA, community involvement, athletic ability, leadership experience, personal interests... all of these are taken into consideration. We wanted Hu Shuang to grow up in an atmosphere where she wasn't defined by a single test score, where she could slowly find her own direction, living according to her own wishes and beliefs, rather than being pushed along by a single yardstick.

Let me say a few words about the learning, working, and living environment that Hu Shuang's parents experienced firsthand.

We were born in the late 1960s, just as China's Cultural Revolution was beginning. Elementary school was fairly relaxed, but by middle school, we were already preparing for the college entrance exam—the gaokao. Those who planned to take it would go to academic high school (roughly equivalent to US grades 9–12), while those who wanted to enter the workforce earlier could attend vocational high school and go straight into a job after graduation. China's elementary, middle, and high school years are the same as in the US—six years, three years, and four years respectively, corresponding to US Grade 1 through Grade 12. The difference is that in China, elementary, middle, and high school are usually different schools, unlike in the US where a student can go from K through 12 in the same building.

In China, academic high school students spend their high school years preparing for the university of their choice, studying intensely. If they meet the admissions standards, they complete a

four-year undergraduate degree. One characteristic of Chinese universities is that it's hard to get in—because you have to pass the strict gaokao screening—but relatively easy to graduate. This is the opposite of many European and American universities, where graduation is much harder.

When I graduated in the early 1990s, university graduates could still be assigned jobs by the state. But starting in 1992, graduates across the country gradually lost that guarantee and had to find work on their own. Hu Shuang's father was one of the lucky ones—part of the last cohort to receive job assignments. These so-called "assigned jobs" meant directly entering a state-owned enterprise or institution, which gave you what people called an "iron rice bowl"—a stable livelihood with reliable security. Most kids who went to vocational high school ended up in all kinds of jobs, scattered across every industry, some without stable work at all.

Let me take this one step further. If you worked in a state-owned enterprise and had enough luck and ability, you might be absorbed into the Chinese Communist Party and become a party member. After that, your path would develop in the direction of becoming a cadre—someone being groomed for leadership. Unfortunately, I was "made" to join the party just before I graduated from university. As an ambitious student leader, not joining would have felt like letting down my advisor and the other students who looked up to me. And then, slowly, you begin to realize that your personal life and your work life become inseparable. Your family life and your social circles all revolve around your work circles, which gradually expand. Eventually, you discover that your life circle, your work circle, and your friend circle are all centered on one common circle: the Party. Yes, if you look at the nature of these circles, they shouldn't be

connected. But when the Party has taken deep root in a person's mind, and you are constantly reminded to align yourself with the organization above you, you find that all your circles are tightly bound together by this one source of interest and power. Whether you admit it or deny it, this connection is always there, reminding you: don't step out of line. Everyone around you is watching.

Someone might ask: is it really that tightly connected? Can't you separate your personal life from your work? Let me explain it this way: the constitution guarantees everyone's rights and obligations. But in the context of the Party, those rights take on a different meaning entirely. The interests of the Party are above everything—even the constitution and the law. This is where China differs from democratic countries. If an American understood this, they would understand why, in China, behaviors that are protected by law in a democracy are considered a lower-order concern in the face of the Party. For example, the freedoms of speech, assembly, belief, and publication are all yours on paper, under the law. But in front of the Party, it's a different story.

If you happen to be Chinese and a Party member, what's required of you at work is not innovation, but obedience to decisions made above you. Keeping your words and actions aligned with the organization above is the most correct thing you can do. Everything else is always secondary. When I came to this realization, I felt deep sadness inside. I often wondered why God had allowed us to be born in this red land. Later, I thought: I can't let my child grow up this way too.

What finally made up my mind was something that happened during Hu Shuang's first year of high school.

One day, I took her to a restaurant on Taidong Pedestrian Street

for lunch. While we were waiting for our food, she took out her political textbook and started memorizing. I looked at her young face—still so innocent—as she earnestly recited content that even we, her parents, felt had no connection to real life. A wave of sorrow and helplessness washed over me. In that moment, I wanted to close the book and tell her, "You don't need to memorize this." But I knew I couldn't. All I could do was silently think: maybe the greatest thing we can do for her is to give her a chance to go to a more open environment, to see the world as it really is.

Sending our child to study and live in the United States was, essentially, an escape from China. As her parents, we couldn't go with her—our own parents were elderly and ill, and we couldn't leave them. So we had to send her out alone. We had already endured enough in our work and living environment. The greatest thing we could do, when we found ourselves powerless to change our own circumstances, was to let our child get away from this one-party state and a society where everything revolves around power. At the same time, we hoped that during the critical years when her worldview was forming, she could see the diversity of the world. In the future, she could choose to stay abroad or come back to China. But that choice would be made after she had "seen the world," not because she simply had no other option.

Our greatest wish was simple: we wanted her to live more authentically, more freely, more like herself.

Hu Shuang's Study Abroad Experience

Before leaving Qingdao for the United States, Hu Shuang lived in our apartment at 147 Hong Kong Middle Road in the Shinan District. She was just a first-year high school student at the time, which in US terms is roughly Grade 10. Why the difference? In China, elementary school takes six years, middle school three, and high school three. So a Chinese first-year high school student is roughly equivalent to a US Grade 10 student. When Hu Shuang first started classes in the US, she felt the pace was slower than in China. You can see this by comparing the curriculum content. Take math, for example: Hu Shuang's grades placed her somewhere around the top half of her class in China. But when she arrived in the US and entered an Oregon state math competition, she actually won an award. This isn't to say that American education is easier or lower-level than China's—it just reflects the different expectations each country has for students at each grade level.

Generally speaking, the academic intensity for Chinese students from kindergarten through university follows an opposite curve compared to American students. In other words, the demands on Chinese children are higher and the content is deeper when they're young, but the university experience is where the gap really flips. But that's not really the subject of this book, so I won't go into it further.

I should say that Hu Shuang wasn't naturally a brilliant student. But she worked hard. From elementary school through middle school, her grades were generally in the middle of her class. Beyond finishing her homework and studying, she had another task: piano practice. Starting from elementary school—I can't

remember exactly which grade—Hu Shuang, guided and encouraged by her mother, began the long journey of piano examinations. From Level 1 all the way to Level 10, and from exams to various piano competitions, her mother took her to many different cities. Beyond cultivating her musical ability, the most practical benefit of the piano exams was that they served as a bonus point for her middle school graduation, giving her priority admission to high schools.

But test scores were still the most important factor. Hu Shuang's high school entrance exam scores weren't high enough to get into Qingdao No. 9 High School—they only met the cutoff for No. 15. After being admitted to No. 15, we used some connections to arrange for her to study as a guest student at No. 9. From then on, Hu Shuang attended classes at No. 9, while I went to No. 15 every semester to handle paperwork with her homeroom teacher so she could keep her student registration there. Being a guest student at No. 9 cost extra—about 40,000 yuan for less than a year. It was expensive.





In the second semester of Hu Shuang's first year of high school, a Sunday school group that her mother had found organized an event. A woman named Zhang—Sister Zhang—invited Jeff Mudrow, the principal of Hosanna Christian School in the United States, to come to Qingdao for a meeting with prospective international students. Our family went with Sister Zhang to meet Principal Jeff and ask some detailed questions. That was the evening of March 26, 2012, at the Starbucks in Jusco. Actually, a month before that, another church group had organized a similar event—Wheaton College Consortium had come to recruit in Qingdao, and our family had attended then too. That had already planted the seed of the idea of studying abroad. But Jeff's visit gave us the chance to sit down face to face and really understand what it would mean. That was when we gradually made up our minds.

At the time, I was working at the company's Shinan District branch office, so I had more flexible hours. I started preparing Hu Shuang's passport and visa paperwork. After meeting us in

Qingdao, Jeff went back to the US and sent us the I-20 form at the end of July, which was crucial for Hu Shuang's F-1 student visa application. Since Hosanna was actively recruiting international students in China, they didn't require a language test—Hu Shuang could enroll without taking the TOEFL. On August 2, I took her to the US consulate in Beijing for her visa interview. On August 7, we received the visa. It all went very smoothly. We were grateful.

Throughout this process, Sister Zhang was enormously helpful. Without her introduction, our family might never have had this opportunity. At the time, though, Sister Zhang was still deciding whether to formally act as an agent for the families she connected with American schools, so we never really discussed how to thank her. And since I was the one handling the communication with Hosanna after meeting Jeff, I wasn't sure how it was supposed to work either. But once we received the I-20 form, we gave Sister Zhang five thousand yuan as a small token of gratitude. Later, after Hu Shuang had gone to the US, we brought her some cash when we met around Christmas—she and her whole family had moved to the US by then. It was our way of thanking her again. Without her help, our dream of studying abroad might never have come so quickly.

Hu Shuang left for the US during the summer after her first year at No. 9 High School. She departed on August 21, officially beginning her American journey. Her father, mother, grandmother, and grandfather—the whole family—went to the airport to see her off. It was calm. Hu Shuang walked through security like she was going on a trip, never once looking back... Years later, I think maybe she had her reasons for not turning around.

When Hu Shuang arrived in the US, she started in Grade 10. As far

as I know, language wasn't a real problem—she could understand her classes and communicate well enough. But for the first few months, she was reluctant to talk to American students. She preferred hanging out with the Asian kids and speaking Chinese, which other students who passed by found a little strange. Principal Jeff mentioned this to me. But honestly, it's the same dynamic you see between adults: when you don't know someone, and there are cultural differences on top of that, not wanting to socialize is perfectly normal. There was another thing too: Hu Shuang didn't really like sports or physical activity. She preferred to study quietly and read. That was a significant difference from her American classmates. To be honest, these behaviors were similar to those of students back in China. American students, on the other hand, were active in class and spent their afternoons doing sports and community activities—a noticeably different set of habits. Once Hu Shuang became aware of these differences, she spent nearly a semester gradually adjusting. She became more active in class. For afternoon extracurriculars, she chose soccer and basketball and even joined the school teams. Her personality slowly opened up.

As for living arrangements—we were especially grateful. Before Hu Shuang left for the US, the school had arranged a host family for her. But just before she arrived, the father of that family had a job change and couldn't continue as a host. So it was decided on short notice that Hu Shuang would stay with Jeff's family. Jeff was the school principal, and he understood kids' behavior patterns well—he was the best possible choice. Jeff had a beautiful wife who had once won a state beauty pageant. She was warm and humble and taught kindergarten at the same school. They had a son, four years younger than Hu Shuang, a very handsome American boy who also attended the school. Living

with Jeff's family, Hu Shuang essentially had a second home. It was like having a new set of parents and a little brother. And then there was Grandpa—Jeff's wife's father, over six feet tall, fair-skinned and lean, in good health. The whole family lived together, and when they had the chance, they'd go on road trips. Hu Shuang even had the opportunity to meet Jeff's parents and other relatives, who lived in Oregon, over Christmas. Everyone was happy to have her, especially Jeff's mother, Casey, who was wonderfully warm and affectionate toward Hu Shuang.

After a year at Hosanna, Jeff accepted a new position. Starting in August 2013, he would become principal of Lenawee Christian School in Michigan. He asked whether we wanted Hu Shuang to transfer with him to the new school, where she could continue living with his family. How could we say no to something like that? We said yes immediately. But a new challenge came with it. Jeff was moving to Lenawee because the position offered better pay and benefits, which naturally meant higher tuition too. At Hosanna, Hu Shuang's tuition had been about twelve thousand dollars a year. At the new school, it was over thirty-five thousand. The campus was nicer too. But this makes sense—in the American system, including universities, the higher the ranking, the higher the tuition, and the better the faculty and quality of the school. That translates into greater social influence and recognition.

Hu Shuang's two years at Lenawee weren't entirely smooth. Like any American student, she had to take the ACT for college admission. But as an international student, she also needed a TOEFL score. Her mother worried about this constantly. Over Hu Shuang's summer breaks, her mother arranged for her to attend a language program at New Oriental School in Beijing. She rented an apartment nearby for one or two months at a time, taking care

of Hu Shuang's meals and daily needs while Hu Shuang buried herself in her studies, desperately trying to improve her English test-taking skills. Her mother was on leave from work, so she had plenty of time to accompany Hu Shuang. I still had to work, so I could only take the train to Beijing on weekends and stay for two days before coming back to Qingdao. That was the only time the three of us could be together. The first time was in early June 2013. We rented an apartment in the Rongshangju complex near the school. Every day Hu Shuang walked to her classes at New Oriental. This became the pattern for every summer after that. Only after her studies were done would she come back to Qingdao to see the rest of the family.

Hu Shuang's hard work in Beijing paid off. Even though she never experienced China's gaokao, her dedication gave her a taste of that intense exam atmosphere. She graduated from Lenawee on schedule and received an acceptance letter from Indiana University. To attend her high school graduation at the end of May 2015, Hu Shuang's mother and I applied for our B1/B2 tourist visas three months in advance. This was during the Obama administration, and we received ten-year visas. I also applied for visas for Hu Shuang's maternal grandfather, her aunt, and her aunt's child, in case they wanted to study abroad or travel in the future. I handled all of this myself—it saved us a good amount in agency fees.

These visas turned out to be a lifesaver for Hu Shuang's parents. That year, we went to the US twice—once in May and again in September. In May, we attended Hu Shuang's high school graduation. In September, we took her to visit several American universities as alternatives to Indiana University.

To make her graduation truly special, Hu Shuang's mother and I did everything we could. First, we each bought new outfits to

wear to the ceremony—we wanted to show a bit of Chinese style. Then we prepared some Chinese-style food for the guests who would be coming to Jeff's home to celebrate with the graduate. We went to the local supermarket for ingredients and stayed up almost the entire night making Chinese dumplings. Besides the regular ones with natural flour skin, we made colorful dumplings with orange and green dough. We also made a big bowl of cold mixed vegetables—a Chinese-style salad, really. Just as we expected, the colorful dumplings and the Chinese salad were a huge hit with the classmates and neighbors who came by. They nearly ate everything.



(Photo: Hu Shuang's graduation.

From left: mother Zhang Dongping, Hu Shuang, father Hu Ming)



(Photo: Hu Shuang's graduation.

From left: Teresa, Shirley(Hu Shuang), Jeff Mudrow)

Let me also share a little story about Hu Shuang's college years. Not long after she started at Indiana University, she noticed something: the school didn't have particularly strong social or professional connections. That planted the seed of wanting to transfer. But transferring meant submitting new TOEFL and ACT scores—essentially, going through the college application process all over again. After discussing it with us, her mother and I decided to go to the US again and visit a few campuses together with Hu Shuang. Three months later, at the end of September, we were back in America. We rented a car, and the three of us set out from IU, visiting Carnegie Mellon, the University of Pennsylvania, MIT, and Harvard along the way. A transfer meant exams were unavoidable. But Hu Shuang worked hard, and in the end, she was accepted by Boston University. She officially started at BU in

2017 and studied until graduation. Because the two schools had different credit systems, Hu Shuang had to make up some credits, which delayed her graduation by about half a year. Her mother and I didn't make it to her BU graduation.

Hu Shuang's time at BU was fulfilling. In the second semester of her junior year, she found a job she loved. The company she applied to was Evisort, an AI software startup. Out of more than two hundred applicants, Hu Shuang was lucky enough to be chosen. I remember she applied for an internship in March 2018 and officially signed a work contract at the end of May 2019, right after getting her diploma. Before that, during Trump's first term, people who hadn't yet graduated were barred from getting work authorization. In March 2021, Evisort was growing and moved from Boston to San Francisco's Silicon Valley. Hu Shuang moved with the company, and as of my writing this, she's still living in San Francisco.

From the time she first went to the US in late July 2012 until the last time we saw each other in January 2018, Hu Shuang came back to China almost every summer. Starting in 2014, when she was preparing for college and then for a transfer, Hu Shuang would come home and then go with her mother to Beijing for TOEFL prep classes. Her mother stayed with her in Beijing. I was too busy with work to take long leaves, so every weekend I'd take the bullet train to Beijing, stay two days, and then head back to Qingdao.

Those days were hard, but they were also full. And more than that—they were happy. During summer break, we'd rent an apartment in Beijing. The living conditions were modest, but it was close to the tutoring center, which made the studying more effective. Facing those difficulties together as a family of three, we found joy even in the struggle. Every time I left them—mother

and daughter—it was heartbreaking. On the train ride back, the only song that could keep me company was Wang Feng's "Beijing, Beijing." It felt like that song was singing my heart. On January 16, 2018, her mother and I saw Hu Shuang off at the airport as she returned to the US. From that day until her mother passed away from illness, we never saw each other again. Not once. Not even now.

At the start of 2019, Hu Shuang had planned to come back to China for the Spring Festival. But something happened—something terrible. Her mother got sick. From February 1, 2019, until December 15, 2022—four full years—I was by her mother's side, caring for her here in China. And those years overlapped with the global COVID-19 pandemic. China was enforcing its so-called "dynamic zero-COVID" policy, which made it nearly impossible to move around freely. So many things we should have been able to do became impossible. This was the hardest time our family has ever faced. Her mother and I didn't want Hu Shuang to come back. But to be honest, even if she had wanted to come, it would have been difficult. And we ourselves couldn't travel anywhere within China either.

I've written about Hu Shuang's mother's illness in another book, so I won't go into detail here. Let me talk about some other things about our family instead.

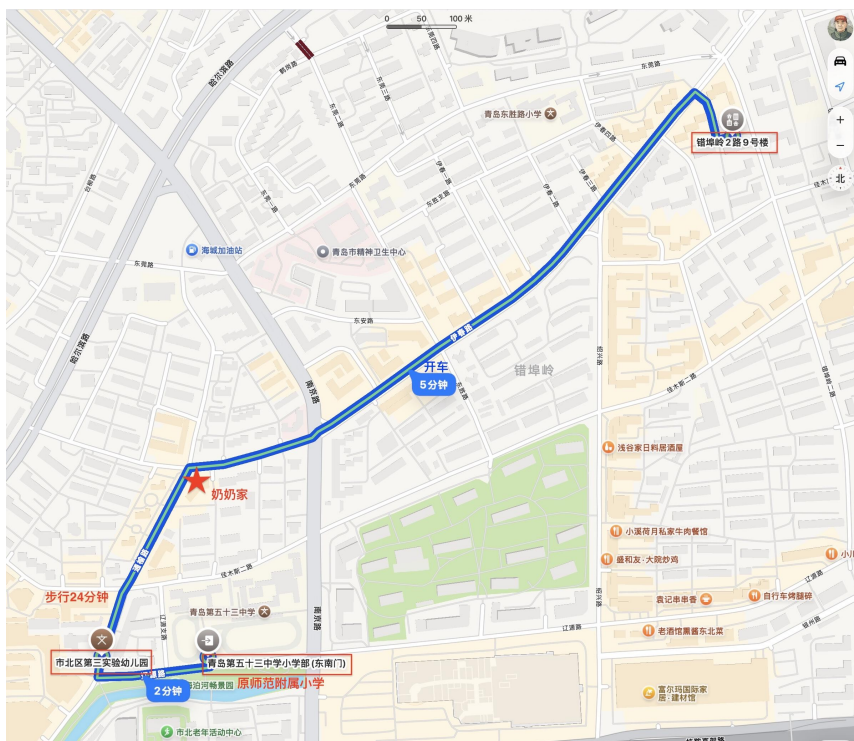
Hu Shuang was born on June 28, 1996. From the moment she arrived, she was treated with tremendous love by the whole family. Both sets of grandparents were still alive then, and Hu Shuang got to meet all of them. The only sadness was that my father was already seriously ill and in the hospital.

Even though he was hospitalized, Hu Shuang did get to see her grandfather. I remember one time when she was about a year old, just learning to walk a bit unsteadily. Grandpa was lying on my

bed and said to her, "Go get Grandpa's glasses—he wants to read the newspaper." So Hu Shuang toddled off to her grandparents' room, grabbed the glasses in her little hands, toddled back, and handed them to him. That scene has stayed in my mind all these years. Grandpa passed away when Hu Shuang was one year and three months old. But before that, at family dinners, Hu Shuang sat at the table with her grandparents, uncles, and aunts, held in her parents' arms. We have photos of it.

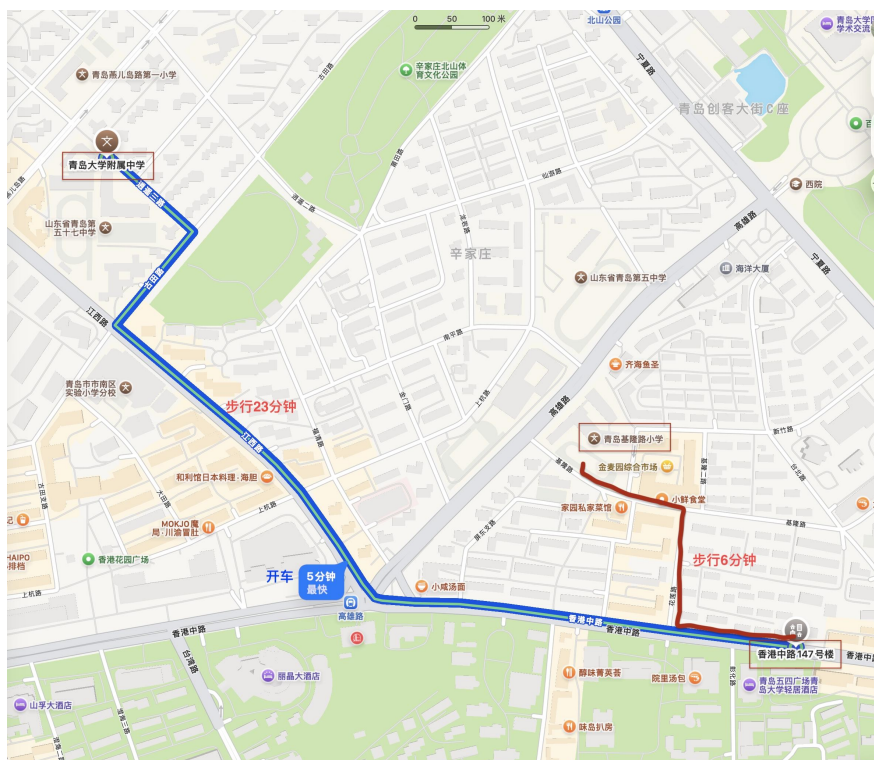
Hu Shuang's Resume

Since we've come this far, let me write out Hu Shuang's resume: September 1999 – July 2002: Qingdao Shibei No. 3 Kindergarten (renamed Shibei No. 3 Experimental Kindergarten in 2021). During this time, our family rented an apartment in the Third District of Cuobuling No. 2 Road, about two bus stops away from Grandma's house. The kindergarten was even closer to Grandma's—just a couple hundred meters. A lot of the time, when Hu Shuang's mother and I couldn't get off work in time to pick her up, Grandma would bring her home, and we'd pick her up from Grandma's after work. Her maternal grandparents' home was also about two bus stops from the kindergarten. Nothing was very far.



September 2002 – August 2004: Qingdao Normal School Affiliated Elementary (renamed the elementary division of Qingdao No. 53 Middle School in 2011). It was less than 200 meters from the kindergarten. Needless to say, Grandma also took on the task of picking Hu Shuang up from time to time. In 2003, because we bought a new apartment and moved to Hong Kong Middle Road in Shinan District, Hu Shuang had to transfer schools in third grade.

September 2004 – July 2008: Qingdao Jilong Road Elementary School. The new school was only about 400 meters from our new home. By then, Hu Shuang's maternal grandmother had passed away, and her maternal grandpa had moved in with us after we bought the house. So it was Grandpa who took Hu Shuang to and from school.



September 2008 – July 2011: Hu Shuang attended the middle school affiliated with Qingdao University. Based on our home address and district boundaries, she should have gone to Qingdao No. 57 Middle School. But because she had her piano exam history—especially the Hong Kong Royal Arts Examiner Association Piano Level 10 certificate and a third-place award in the Shandong Provincial Cultural Department's Third Social Art Level Examination—she was accepted as a special talent student at the Qingdao University-affiliated middle school. This was due to her mother's tireless efforts and, of course, Hu Shuang's own hard practice. Neither could have been missing.

September 2011 – August 2012: First year of high school. Her official student records were at Qingdao No. 15 High School, but

she actually attended classes as a guest student at Qingdao No. 9 High School. She had nothing to do with what was happening at No. 15—her homeroom teacher there would contact me from time to time, and I handled everything as her father.

August 2012 – August 2013: Hu Shuang's first school in the United States was Hosanna Christian School in Klamath Falls, Oregon, where she attended Grade 10. As I described earlier, she went through the process of finding her footing in an unfamiliar place.

August 2013 – May 2015: Grades 11 and 12 at Lenawee Christian School in Michigan. Here, Hu Shuang found a new way of living—getting along with classmates, studying in a welcoming environment. This was where she truly integrated into her new surroundings.

August 2015 – May 2017: Her first two years of university at Indiana University. Here, Hu Shuang began to think independently and make her own life choices.

August 2017 – December 2019: Two years at Boston University, from which she graduated. Here, Hu Shuang gained a broader perspective and a clearer sense of purpose. Not only did she complete her degree, but in March 2018, before she even graduated, she was hired by the startup she loved: Evisort. As of the writing of this book, she has worked there for over eight years. In September 2024, Evisort was acquired by Workday, and Hu Shuang was recently promoted to P4 Senior Software Engineer.

Afterword

The manuscript has reached this point, and it is already late into the night. Outside the window, the sea breeze from Qingdao blows into my study, carrying the dampness of early summer—just like those ordinary and extraordinary nights from years ago, when Hu Shuang was still here.

Child, this is what your father wanted to say to you.

From your grandparents' generation—who came to Qingdao with nothing but their bare hands from the villages of Laixi and Laiyang—to your mother and me, who stumbled through the system and staggered through our faith in this generation, to you, who crossed the ocean alone to make your way in the world—three generations, three different ways of living. But there is one thread that has never been broken: no matter how far you go, your roots are always here.

The red-tiled roofs and green trees of Qingdao, the sea breeze and the beer—they will not fade just because distance separates you. The classrooms where your grandfather and grandmother stood at the blackboard with chalk dust flying, the busy figure of your maternal grandparents in the courtyard at No. 9 Tailiu Road, the sound of your own laughter roller-skating on the rooftop of the building on Yichun Road when you were little... These ordinary people and these everyday scenes, pieced together—they are your China. They are your home.

Maybe one day, when you have children of your own, they will ask: "Mom, what was your hometown like?" When that time comes, you won't need to search through memory boxes and photograph albums. Just open this book, and read it with them. Read from the beaches of Qingdao to the mist-shrouded peaks of

Laoshan Mountain. From your grandfather's chalk characters on the blackboard to your mother's piano playing. From the courage you found at sixteen, crossing the Pacific alone, to the longing we have carried for you here, day and night.

Yes, child. You have a home in China.

This home is not written in a household registration book. It is not printed on a property deed. It lives in the May wind that blows through Qingdao. It lives on Zhanqiao Pier, wrapped in the sea fog of July. It lives in the hearts of everyone who loves you. This door will always be open for you—no matter the twelve hours of time difference, no matter the twelve thousand kilometers of Pacific Ocean between us.

Fly far and fly free. But remember to look back, every now and then.

There will always be a light here, waiting for you.

Hu Ming

Qingdao, May 28, 2026

(The End)